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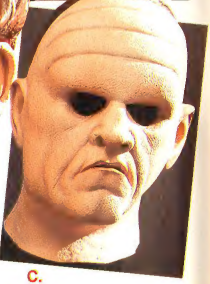

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WORD BALLOONS

What Price Glory?

Once, without too much trouble, you could buy them all. Every comic book published that month could be purchased—all those you really *had* to have (i.e. the Marvels, the DCs and selected Charlton, Warren and Dell/Gold Key titles)—the main trouble was finding them all. That created the quest—the weekly search of 7-11s, Ma & Pa stores, grocerettes and newsstands in pursuit of everything because no one place (as opposed to today's well-stocked SF/comics stores) had them all.

Finding them all was the challenge. Paying for them all, child's play.

Why, for that weekly $1 allowance I got in 1966, I could buy eight comics (no tax) and still have pennies left over. With a little judicious cajoling and subtle begging, parents and relatives might even purchase certain educational comics (Aunt Lillian, for example, bought me *Eerie* #5). On occasion, I even assigned friends the task of buying selected new comics in trade for my older duplicates. The 50-odd comics I had to have could be had. And the prices (12¢ to 25¢) made it easy to buy the borderline books—the ones which were no longer interesting (usually due to creative team changes)—and wait it out until they got good again.

Undeniably, those were cheaper times, but as one grew older, it was still possible to buy them all. Allowances grew. Revenues from summer jobs, birthday gifts, part-time work could all be diverted to that necessary comics purchase. Older and more sophisticated you might become as you endured America's educational system, but you could still obtain all the four-color wonders necessary to escape real life.

But *how* do you do it today?

It would seem impossible. My monthly tab of $4 or $5 some 25 years ago increased as the number (and prices) of comics I wanted grew over the years to, say, $25 or $30. But now the costs of a comic book hobby (also known as graphic addiction) approach the astronomical. Capital City Distribution reports that it would have cost $1,224.40 to buy *one* copy of *every* color and black & white comic listed in its April catalog.

Needless to say, only the foolish rich would possess enough mad money to splurge a thousand bucks on the whole magilla. Even in theory, no one person actually buys *all* those books. But clearly, with titles ranging from 75¢ to $4.95, with some books now twice monthly, purchasing even the most necessary (to you) comics can cost $100 or more every month.

You can't keep reading the borderline books. Every new comic you add to your purchase list means something else must go. For many of you, there has probably already come a time when even what you once considered "essentials" have been pruned from that list. Now, you're buying the "can't-live-withouts" and trying to forget the rest.

Sure, your allowances and part-time jobs rack up lots more dough now. Sure, you can purchase your books through a subscription service at a discount (and thus buy more). Sure, the costs of everything have gone up and I realize comic book (and for that matter, magazine) prices have to be what they are—and *not* because the creators are finally being paid (mostly) respectable wages; the culprit's the ever-increasing cost of paper and printing. Sure, there's far more variety and, at the very least, a better (printing/packaging) quality to today's books than yesterday's comics.

Today, finding them all is child's play. Selecting what you can afford is now the challenge. Sadly, it's no longer possible. You can't buy them all.

—*David McDonnell/Editor*

COMICS SCENE RETURNS as the summer ends with that postponed conversation with artist **Neal** ("Don't call me legendary") **Adams**...a long look back, courtesy of the new comic strip, to the days **When I Was Short**...and several colorful (and possibly outrageous) surprises. It's all in **COMICS SCENE #15, on sale August 23, 1990.**

MEANWHILE, next month brings the pulse-pounding reappearance of **COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR**. Artist **Brian Bolland** paints a picture of his career and an unexpected **Dick Tracy** filmmaker provides behind-the-scenes info. Plus: Amazing fold-out posters! Look for **COMICS SCENE SPECTACULAR #3, on sale July 24, 1990.**

LETTERING

Personal replies are **impossible.** Other fans & advertisers may contact readers whose letters are printed here. To **avoid** this, mark your letter "Please Withhold My Address." Otherwise, we retain the option to publish it. Write:
COMICS SCENE
475 Park Avenue South, 8th Flr.
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...I'm writing to complain about the sorry state of animation and interpretations today. I'm really sick of them. When I first saw the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cartoon, I said, "Wow! This is awesome. The comic must be real good." I continued to watch the cartoon, until I read Craig Ingerto's letter in COMICS SCENE #7. Curious, I picked up a TMNT graphic novel.

I then realized how wrong Group W Productions were. When was there a TCRI alien named Krang? Splinter a human? When was April a TV reporter and Baxter Stockman short and white? That's like turning the Vietnam War into a sitcom with bad humor.

James Ferris
2314 Vista Avenue
Walnut Creek, CA 94596

...This is in response to Craig Ingerto's letter in CS #13. He states that the merchandising of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles has caused the Turtles to lose their soul. But really, the merchandising has nothing to do with the *real* Turtles. So, there's a kiddie version of the Turtles, don't read/watch that version if it doesn't suit you. Anyone so inclined can pick up the Mirage version, and no amount of media hype can keep an insightful person from seeing the Turtles *exactly* as they were meant to be seen.

Lynn Tucker
5809 Robin Lane
Las Vegas, NV 89108

...Quite frankly, I prefer the Turtles' mass market appeal status in the cartoons and Archie comics more than I do the original comic because they are kooky and strange. To quote from the letters written to Craig Ingerto, the Turtles were intended to be "an insightful parody of comic books today." And they still are to me. Only now they've taken that one step further. They remind people like myself that being strange doesn't have to be so terrible, if you put it in the right perspective. Just like Batman, the Turtles are subject to interpretation to anyone who sees them, and that's something that time can't erase.

Your article on June Foray in CS #13 was also excellent. I'm a big fan of her amazing talents.

Steven Aceuedo
Bronx, NY

...I have been reading *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* since issue #11. When the prospect of a cartoon came up, I was very excited. Then to my dismay, I saw what was only a fraction of the Turtles' comic fame in the cartoons. I've watched them for a while, then recently to my disgust, I found that they were constantly showing reruns. The only reason a new episode was issued was to advertise a new figure or toy from the Turtles line. Thus, I stopped watching the show.

Now with the Turtles movie, I'm afraid the entire country will believe the lie set up in the cartoon (i.e. Michaelangelo being a surfer-type, Shredder being an incompetent idiot, etc.). Recently, I read in STARLOG that CBS is planning to make a new, separate Turtles cartoon. I'm torn between hopes that this will be a carbon copy of the comic and stomach-wrenching fear that this may be even worse than the current cartoon on TV. I hope you'll cover this new cartoon thoroughly so we'll all know when it hits the airwaves. Of more current concern to all the true TMNT fans (or, for that matter, fans of any other comic book) is the media's coverage of these events. What I saw on *Entertainment Tonight* drove me to write this letter. Mary Hart (yes, the same one who made the *Batman* movie look childish) introduced the gala opening of the *Turtles* movie, with the children of stars running around, dressed as Turtles, saying such "fake Turtle" lines like "Cowabunga, dudes" or "Exactamundo, dudes." How can we, the comics fans trying to show the outside world that comics are *intelligent* pieces of literature, let atrocities like this go on? As a struggling comics writer myself, I am physically sickened at how Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird sold their creations down the toilet for a buck. If my comic creations are ever optioned for TV or movies, you can be sure that they'll be carbon copies of the characters fans like myself have grown to love on the comics page.

Adam Patyk
Address Withheld

...I have nothing against the cartoon, but I was hoping that the movie would run more true to the comic. A little variation would have been good in the Turtles' design. For instance, the Turtles could have been modified to look more realistic

Turtles Photo: Copyright 1990 Universal City Studios

WANTED!?! MORE FANS LIKE WOLFANG PUCK! The gourmet pizza chef of LA's trendy Spago restaurant, Puck served his trademark dish to certain Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles during their official "arrival" at California's Universal Studios.

for the screen as was done for Batman.

The *TMNT* cartoon made the Turtles more accessible for general audiences. I understand an artist sometimes has to compromise to get his ideas seen, but I thought that the movie wouldn't have such boundaries as the Turtles looking too much alike or being too violent. I would like to have seen a more serious adaptation of the Turtles. I've always thought TMNT was a good and original concept, but I just wish the guys at New Line Cinema could have gone a different way with the movie.

Gabriel Marquez
Baytown, TX

...Overall, I found Barry Gantt and Sandra Pungor's article on the Kelly family's revival of *Pogo* in issue #11 even-handed and fair, even if certain remarks of some of their interviewees were not always so. One of these is the remark attributed to B. Kliban, who took the Kellys to task for reviving *Pogo*, saying that "money is the excuse for everything these days, but it's sort of like digging up your granny." Well, Kliban, we're talking about comparatively meager profits being split up among several Kelly family members after the LA Times Syndicate's hefty percentage; after expenses [all covered by the family]; and after writer Larry Doyle and artist Neal Sternecky's salaries. As one who is well acquainted with one member of the Kelly clan here in the Washington, D.C. area, I can assure you the Kelly family is *not* getting rich off *Pogo*, nor is it likely they ever will. As a life-long Pogo fan (since 1961, when I was 10 years old), I am glad Mrs. Kelly and family moved in the direction of reviving *Pogo*, a decision which, in my opinion, was long overdue. From what I can tell, the primary motive for doing so was nothing less than respect for Walt Kelly and the desire to keep his work alive and in more than reprints and anthologies.

The question of whether or not a comic strip *should* remain extant after the death of its creator has *already* been answered since the deaths of Chester Gould, Chic Young, et. al. The *only* issue, therefore, should be the *quality* of the effort. Of course, the new *Pogo* is not Walt Kelly cloned nor need it be in order to be worthy of Kelly's memory and up to Kelly's standards. I don't disagree with the suggestion that Kelly's work was so fine that it raised the newspaper comic strip to an "art form" (however overrated and abused that term has become in recent years). And perhaps the quality of the current creative team's efforts does not satisfy some Pogophiles, as well as some professionals. After all, Walt Kelly is a hard act to follow. But Kelly's 25-plus years of *Pogo* has laid down a substantial foundation upon which the current team (and others after them) can build, and build well. For one thing, the main characters were so well developed and established by the time Kelly died that they sometimes seem to have taken on a life of their own.

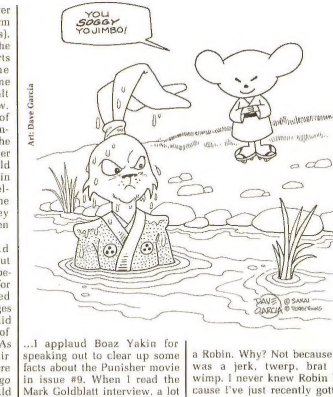
Clearly, Doyle and Sternecky had their work cut out for them from the very beginning. They deserve credit for what they've accomplished thus far, despite disadvantages which Walt Kelly himself did not have to face (reduction in printing space, for example). As long as they put forth their best effort, and as long as there is a sufficient demand for *Pogo* in the marketplace, they should be allowed to grow in their work, and their work should be allowed to grow with them. Doyle, Sternecky and the Kelly family have taken on a tough task and a big gamble. They should receive encouragement, support and constructive criticism, not brickbats from malcontents nor sour grapes from other cartoonists whose popularity has waned in recent years. As for the issue of trying to make money, so what? Walt B. Kliban knows he believe the profit motive had little or nothing to do with his own efforts?

John M. Esparolini
920 Moorefield Creek Road
Vienna, VA 22180

...I go Pogo in a big way and find the original's play of language nearing Shakespeare's talent. The new Larry Doyle and Neal Sternecky strip, while not coming from Kelly's distinctive and amazing mindset, has had plenty of memorable moments to its own credit.

It's great to see the newer strips being reprinted in *The Fort Mudge Most* which is published by the Pogo Fan Club. The First National Pogo Fan Club Convention is set for July 6-8 at the 17th Annual Chicago Comicon. Meet the current strip creators and fellow-fans, and, oh yeah, does anybody out there have a copy of the record "Songs of the Pogo," (1956), who would want to sell?

Frank Farrell
Ridgewood, NJ



...I applaud Boaz Yakin for speaking out to clear up some facts about the Punisher movie in issue #9. When I read the Mark Goldblatt interview, a lot of what he said disturbed me—mostly his ignorance of comic characters. Goldblatt's statement that Dolph Lundgren would look silly in spandex was just stupid. What Punisher story ever stated he wore spandex? And why would it be so difficult to spray paint a skull on the Punisher's uniform in the movie like Yakin said he had written in the original script? Too many times, producers and directors have altered characters from comic books, novels and screenplays with disastrous results.

I absolutely agree with Yakin when he stated that, "there is a way to do comics on film and maintain their integrity, but the producers of this film have, sadly, little respect for the medium they were adapting." How true!

Speaking of producers, I see that Menahem Golan is producing Captain America. Can somebody tell me if Golan *ever* produced a decent movie?

As far as Yakin's letter is concerned, I am ashamed of how COMICS SCENE treated his letter. Yakin's letter should have at least been placed in Word Balloons. It appears that COMICS SCENE has lost its objectivity.

Tony Fuentes
California

...In answer to Willie Holmes' question in CS #13 as to why people wanted the end of Robin, well, I never thought there should have *been* a Robin! I do not like the idea of a Robin. Why? Not because he was a jerk, twerp, brat or wimp. I never knew Robin because I've just recently gotten into Batman comics, and I avoid those with him. Why should there be no Robin? It's really very simple. Because he is—was—a child. I don't care if he was a teenager. He was still a child. Someone to be looked after and loved, taught right from wrong...encouraged to make something worthwhile of himself, *not to* be put in the path of danger—especially since so much of the danger is from "crazies." If Batman needed a partner, it should have been an adult.

Oh, I would like to ask: Why wasn't Danny Elfman's score nominated for an Academy Award? Are the people who nominate deaf? Don't they know music when they hear it? Elfman's score was—is—superb! Parts of it give me goose-bumps. Forget that it's the music score for *Batman*. This is music!! I especially love the main theme and "Descent into Mystery" (where the Batmobile is racing through the woods). Oooh! Yes, the music to *The Little Mermaid* is cute. Yes, I enjoy *Indiana Jones & The Last Crusade's* score. But what I heard of the others that were nominated did not impress me at all. Elfman's music was (is) so far beyond those nominated, it's a crying shame. It also makes me realize what a crock the Academy Awards are. Give me the People's Choice Awards. At least they more realistically reflect what people like.

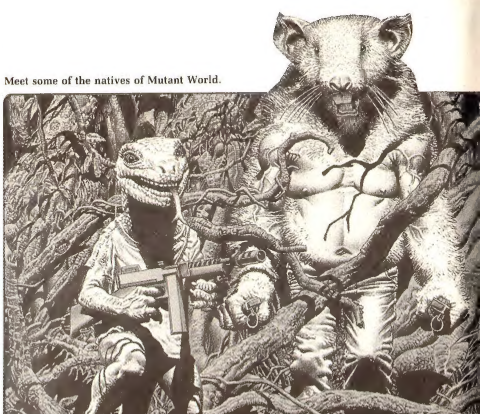
Regenia Marracino
Address Withheld

Back by popular demand!" is a common tag-line whenever a particular product warrants a sequel. But both writer Jan Strnad and artist Richard Corben openly admit that wasn't necessarily the case with *Son of Mutant World*, a follow-up mini-series to the original *Mutant World* of nearly a decade ago.

"I had just finished two years of doing *Den* and I needed a change," explains Corben, who also fills the roles of editor and publisher. "Corben Studio's most popular books have been *Den* and *Mutant World*, I thought we would do another *Mutant World*. Of course, I like *Mutant World*, too."

But if he, like fans of the original, was expecting more of the same dark unravelling of the human psyche that served as the first narrative tour through this post-apocalyptic, mutant-saturated alternate future, he was in for a surprise.

" 'We ought to do this again,' " says Strnad of people related to an originally successful project. "In the case of *Mutant World*, we *couldn't* do it again because Dimento [the story's central figure] had gone through his big change. We've told the most powerful part of his story—his growing up and his entrance into adulthood. Now he's a man: What are you going to do? The same story *can't* be told again.



Meet some of the natives of Mutant World.

Return to the Mutant Planet

Years after it was first explored, Jan Strnad & Richard Corben find they have a world to conquer...again.

"If you did it again with another character, people are going to say, 'This is just like the first one. It's like *Friday the 13th II, III, IV, V*...' I think it's a mistake to recapture the original. It's almost a no-win situation. It's either going to disappoint people because it's the same thing only not as good, or it's going to annoy them because it's different.

"I would rather annoy people than disappoint them."

But rather than being annoyed with his frequent collaborator, Corben finds Strnad's departures exciting. "He *always* surprises me," says the artist. "I mean, usually the idea for a project comes from me. I'm the one who says, 'Let's do something!' I may give him a rough idea for the subject, but I never know what he's going to do with it. It's never what I expect, but it's always good."

In the case of *Son of Mutant World*, the major surprise came in terms of the overall tone of the five-issue fully-colored series. Rather than the bleak, somber tone of its predecessor, the current exploits of Dimentia, daughter of Dimento, are more light-hearted.

"These people are at a different stage," explains Strnad. Familiar characters like the soul-searching Dimento, Bugs and Creeper, have relinquished the spotlight to Dimentia, the offspring with a mutant father and a clone for a mother, her grizzly bear and best friend Ollie, a duo of token humans named Trapper and Junior, the nihilistic Herschel and his two-headed bird named Bruno, and a military-minded mutant madman named Mudhead. Only the perpetually optimistic Max, a neo-colonist featured in *Mutant World*, finds himself in the center of the sequel. "At least in the case of Max, they're trying to get civilization going again.

"The real reason it's lighter," Strnad confesses, "is just because I *wanted* to write something lighter. I felt that Dimento and his story was pretty heavy really. Although there's a great deal of humor in the original, with Bugs and Creeper and such, I just personally wanted to lighten up.

"Dimentia has nowhere near the depth Dimento had—he was one of a kind. I don't think any of the characters in the *Son of* would compare to Dimento in terms of pathos; it's just a different kind of story. This is more of an ensemble piece. Because Dimentia is not as deep as her father, she's not worth focusing on for 60 pages. But she has her place, and Herschel has his, and Max has his, and the mutants have theirs."

We've never specified what the holocaust was that caused Mutant World. It was just called 'The Big Goof,' " says Corben of the doomsday scenario that triggered the planetwide mutations of most of

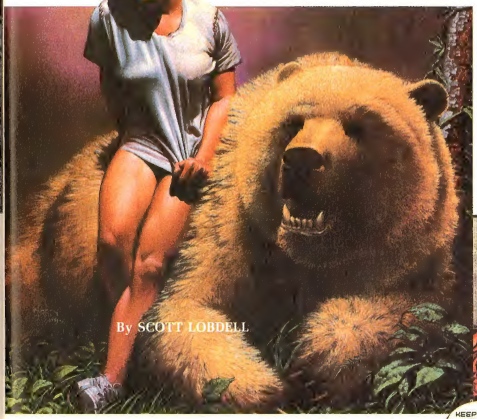
this futuristic Earth's unfortunate populace. While the mystery allows readers to decide for themselves if the Big Goof was economical, political, nuclear or simply computer error-oriented in nature, it also allows the creators room to explore a lighter touch as time goes by. "The original took place right after the Big Goof, whereas this story takes place 15, maybe 20 years later. We have the natural world re-establishing itself so this is not so much the story of a ruined civilization. Though that might be the message at the end," Corben is quick to amend, "there's still a lot of grit left."

"It's not a deep philosophical tract by any means," Strnad explains. "But it does address questions such as 'Is the universe basically benign or is it basically hostile?'—kind of Woody Allenesque questions rather than going for the sentiment or the heart. It depends on the type of story you like or the mood you're in as to whether or not you'll like it better than *Mutant World*.

"Maybe I'm just not as serious and angry as I used to be," Strnad offers. "It's the kind of thing you have to go through, and hopefully you manage to work through it. It's one thing to be an angry young man, and it's another to be an angry old fart. I *don't* want to be an angry old fart."

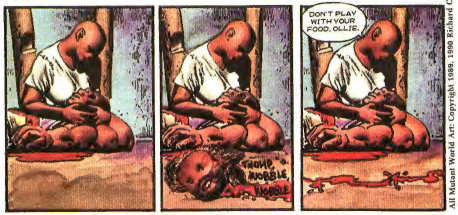
Lest potential readers shy away from this sequel because the out-of-print original is admittedly difficult to find, Strnad assures, "You don't need to know anything from *Mutant World* to enjoy *Son of Mutant World*. If you did read the first one, it will enrich the experience, but it is *not* required reading."

In the event that these adventures on Mutant World are popular enough to spawn several more generations of offspring, publisher Corben acknowledges he's prepared to stand and deliver. "I hope it's very successful, but it's unlikely Jan would be as involved



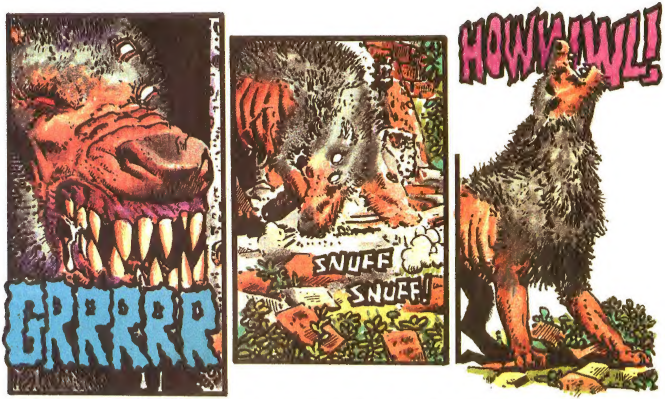
Rather than live through a repetition of his earlier epic, Dimento dies so that Dimentia can enjoy her own odd adventures.

"*Son of Mutant World* is just a different kind of story," says Strnad. "This is more of an ensemble piece."



All Mutant World Art: Copyright 1980, 1990 Richard Corben & Jan Strnad

All Mutant World Art: By & Courtesy Richard Corben



One of the results of the Big Goof goes on the prowl. "We have the natural world re-establishing itself," notes Corben.

because he's going Big Time [taking, among others, a job as staff writer for Disney television and writer for Epic's *Stalkers*.] Because it's as much his story as it is mine, we would have to come to an agreement if I said I wanted to do another and he said he didn't have the time. We would have to agree on how the next story would be done."

While that amiable "give-and-take" attitude is at the core of their creative camaraderie, Corben confides their working relationship is just as often "give and throw away."

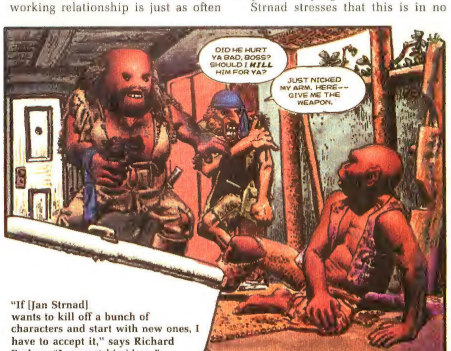
"When you work with Jan, well..." Corben begins good-naturedly. "I had some ideas of what *Son of Mutant World* might be, but he just..." the artist pauses searching for the right euphemism "...started fresh. I can't dictate my wishes to him. If he wants to kill off a bunch of characters and start with new ones, I have to accept it. Working with Jan, there are conflicts, but I respect his ideas and they're usually right."

Strnad stresses that this is in no way a slight to any of Corben's original ideas. "When someone gives you an idea for a starting point on a story, it often develops that you end up throwing many things out. I do that with the stuff I write for myself where *I'm* the one who came up with the initial idea. I have some things I want to do when I start, and end up throwing out ideas all the time.

"This is because once you get right down to making it work, panel-for-panel, you find that maybe what you wanted to do isn't going to work, or you find a better idea. So, I never start out meaning to throw Rich's stuff away, but that's just part of the process, whether the beginning ideas are his, mine or somebody else's.

"What I try to do is try to keep his strengths in mind, to do something I think he might enjoy illustrating. For example, I would never write a story about a ballerina. For one thing, she wouldn't be able to land on her feet because she would be too top-heavy," he laughs, referring to Corben's penchant for portraying glandularly over-endowed women. "It's just not the sort of thing that's suited to Richard's talents. I keep things like that in mind."

Of course, Strnad has no monopoly on creative alterations. "It would be unusual if Richard *didn't* throw me a curve once in a while," he acknowledges. "If you're working with an artist and he did *exactly* what you had in mind, then that's a one-in-a-million occurrence. I've never had



"If [Jan Strnad] wants to kill off a bunch of characters and start with new ones, I have to accept it," says Richard Corben. "I respect his ideas."

that happen. I mean, you're two different people."

"Definitely," concurs Corben. "I've worked with a dozen different writers, and each has been a different experience. With some of them, I push my weight around, and some of them I 'let' them push their weight around.

"With Jan and I, it's pretty equal. I mean, we may argue about different things, but I usually have the final word as publisher/editor," Corben laughs. "We'll seem like we're going on an even keel for a little bit, then I'll draw something in and he'll call up and say, 'What the heck is *that*?'"

A difference of opinion with management is something Corben and Strnad can agree upon.

"I have a hard time getting along with other editors and publishers," confesses Corben, who has been self-publishing with his wife for the past four years. While he joyfully insists he has loved every minute of it, he does note that it has been a learning experience. "One of the first things I found out about self-publishing is that you can't just do one project, then rest, then start thinking about another. You have to know the next one while you're working on the first one, especially when you're soliciting for distributors.

Hardly the optimist, Herschel sets off to meet the end of the world with Bruno.

"Dimentia has nowhere near the depth Dimento had," comments Strnad.

WHEN WE GET TO THE ISLAND, THE FIRST THING I'LL DO IS HANG UP THE WIND CHIME THAT PAPA MADE FOR ME. WE'LL HAVE A CUTE LITTLE GRASS SHACK, AND YOU'LL SLEEP RIGHT OUTSIDE MY DOOR, AND AT NIGHT I'LL HEAR THE CHIMES TINKLING--

"You have to do the cover for a book long before you do the art. I used to say I'll let the cover develop from whatever's in the art. But no, you've *got* to do that *first* in order to promote the book."

Corben also discovered early on that he would be responsible for making the decisions regarding a target audience for his work. "I had never really thought about it specifically before that. When I do comics, it's mainly to suit myself. If I'm successful, I'll find an audience. They may be teenagers or young adults.

"When I started self-publishing, I did the *Den* series, and before that, *Rip in Time* and *Children of Fire*. I wanted the series to be a success, so I *did* make some business decisions when I tried to appeal to the widest possible audience. I don't think I was too successful," Corben muses. "In fact, it may have been a joke, really, in that I still had my same audience in my attempts to find a new audience. I don't think it worked."

So then, Richard Corben might not be the brilliant innovator that comic critics and fans often claim him to be? "I don't know *why* they came up with that," he explains candidly. "It's not that one guy is more talented than another, it's just that he has had the right breaks. I was in the right place at the right time. I was getting into the underground comics and *Heavy Metal* when they were popular. I was just lucky."

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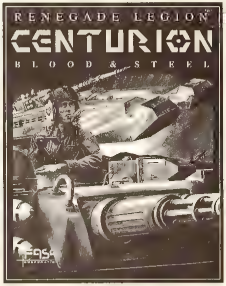

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Gerard Jones is overworked—and uncannily rendered in profile by Mark Badger.

THE Scribe STRIKES!

Keeping up with Gerard Jones means reading a great many comic books.

By T.L. JOHNS

What do such DC Comics titles as *The Shadow Strikes!*, *Green Lantern* and *Justice League Europe* have in common with an independent hit like *The Trouble With Girls* and the four-issue prequel to *The Adventures of Ford Fairlane*?

They all share the writing of the ambitious Gerard Jones. The last time that Jones' name appeared in these pages (CS #6), his main projects were the monthly exploits of Lester Girls in *The Trouble With Girls* and an as-yet-unfinished definitive compilation of TV's situation comedies.

Since then, Jones has taken on project after project. Some, including Jones himself, say that he has taken on too much.

"Yes. I'm overworked. I said yes to one or two things too many. But it should clear; I should be able to stop working these 60 to 70-hour weeks soon. But right now, yes, I *am* busy."

One of the books Jones has been working on steadily is the new *Green Lantern* series. He jumped into the series a few months back by writing dialogue for Keith Giffen's plots on the *Emerald Dawn* mini-series. He is now the only writer, along with three artists (Pat Broderick, Joe Staton and Mark D. Bright), on the latest chapters in the lives of Green Lantern Corps members Hal Jordan, Guy Gardner and John Stewart. Jones has the series planned out up to issues in the teens and promises each green-clad hero will have his day. However, the beginning—and quite a bit of the series—will focus on Hal Jordan.

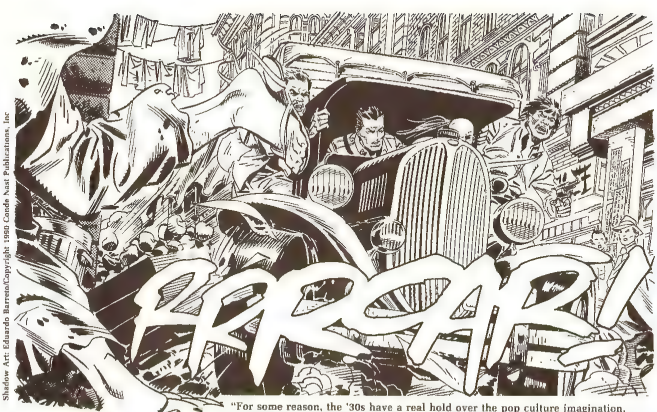
"I think they [DC] see Green Lantern as a character who has been wandering around the company's stable for a while," Jones says. "The character was in *Action Comics* and there was the *Green Lantern Corps* where there was no single Green Lantern. So, I guess it has been several years since Hal Jordan has been a real selling thing, and this is being perceived as 'bringing back' a character who has been floating around in limbo."

The first seven issues, according to Jones' outline, will be "concluding and undoing many things" his predecessors had done, including bringing back the Guardians. These issues will primarily revolve around Hal Jordan,

Jones Caricature Art: Mark Badger/Cauldron Gerard Jones

Green Lantern Art: Pat Broderick/Mark A. Nelson

Shadow Art: Eduardo Barreto/Copyright 1990 Comic Nasd Publications-ish



Shadow Art: Eduardo Barreto/Copyright 1990 Condé Nast Publications, Inc

"For some reason, the '30s have a real hold over the pop culture imagination, especially '30s underworld," says Jones, who every month lets it blast out of the past in *The Shadow Strikes!*

but Guy and John Stewart will make cameo appearances. Jones' intention is to give each one his turn in the limelight, yet keep the other two in the minds of the readers.

A four-part Guy Gardner story will begin in the eighth issue, while John Stewart's character will begin to be explored by *Green Lantern* #12.

"My big focus in the first seven issues is reconstructing Hal Jordan. I didn't like the way the character was in the issues I had to read to catch up on. I'm taking him from what I see as a self-hating whiner, and rebuilding him into a character I would like."

Does this mean Jones is partial to Hal Jordan?

"Yeah, especially as a kid. For me, I can't really see superheroes separate from childhood nostalgia. Hal was the one I read as a kid, and Guy is a fun recent thing but not something to whom I have this infantile connection. Hal's the one that jazzed me up.

"Guy seems to be the most popular, so I want to have him in there. The first three issues are basically a running conflict between Hal and Guy. We bring that to a resolution. But the beginning is basically Hal trying to establish a new life for himself on Earth, apart from his Green Lantern Corps stuff. And, of course, Guy will be constantly flying around, harassing him."

And, Jones promises, there are some interesting changes in John Stewart's character being planned.

"One of the challenges of the series is what to do with John Stewart. He's an awfully flat character. There's a problem with black characters in comics. I think writers are intimidated by the prospect of doing anything that would offend anybody. So, the characters usually end up being incredibly straight and dull. I'm going to try to figure out some ways to make John Stewart human.

"I'll also reveal some things about the Guardians and the way the Green Lantern Corps works. Hal's job for a while is going out and recruiting new Green Lantern Corps members, so we'll get some more stuff there. I'm not going to get into the big, cosmic stuff because apparently there's talk of someone else [SF author Larry Niven] doing a mini-series on the origins of the Guardians, so I'm leaving that alone. I'm concerned with what has already appeared in Green Lantern's past, and changing it and making it appealing to me. It seems to need a little shot in the arm."

In working with three different artists, one for each Green Lantern, Jones tries to "keep the strengths of each artist in mind" while writing the script, but for the most part, he simply writes to "tell the story."

"I certainly don't mind back and forthing with artists, but so far, I haven't had much contact with them. In a way, it's better for me, because I can keep a better focus on the series as a whole and maintain consistency. Sometimes, I just prefer mailing in a script to an unseen pair of hands."

That is virtually the way Jones works with his most popular series, *The Shadow Strikes!*

"This is the extreme of the 'full script' method. The artist [Eduardo Barreto] lives in Uruguay and that's a *long* way to make phone calls; it's difficult to make any kind of direct contact. But the South American artists seem to be more from the old school where you just take the script and you illustrate it. I just send the stuff off and I get back what I wrote. He may change an angle or something, but that's all. I am doing a two-issue filler with Mark Badger, though, and he has been co-plotter on that. It's a whole different relationship."

The Shadow Strikes! has become a favorite with new readers and Shadow fans alike, and Jones feels that love of the character will probably continue far into the future.

"First, he's really neat-looking. He's just a great visual trademark. The hat, the big nose, the whole shebang. And he's one of those characters comic book artists love to draw, second maybe only to the Batman. But apart from that, I think there's a real last nation with his period, the '30s. For some reason, the '30s have a real hold over the pop culture imagination, especially '30s underworld."

He enjoys writing about the Shadow, Jones explains, because it challenges his imagination and ability to keep that time period alive in our modern world. So, instead of just re-

doing old pulp ideas. Jones works with taking basic human stories and uses the Shadow's world as a "historical backdrop" or he may use the best known characters or things of the era and combine them with an edge of parody.

"There is something faintly ridiculous about the Shadow that makes him more fun. He's a showman. He has his disappearing and appearing routines and his ring and there's something fun about these bits. And there's something about the Shadow that you don't have to apologize for them. You don't have to make them more mature or come up with some origin that makes it all sound psychologically reasonable.

"Another thing I try to do is to *not* just redo '30s stories, but do the stories that were never done then because the people didn't have the perspective or the subject matter was too touchy. I have a several-parter coming up with Frank Nitti, who took over the Capone gang when Al went to jail. I have him trying to get into a legitimate business venture so I can play with this interaction between mobsters and respectable businessmen."

But almost as much as the hero himself or his world, Jones enjoys writing the adventures of the Shadow's assistants. "The Shadow's cast is a lot of fun. I really have to stop myself from turning it into *Margo Lane Strikes!*" he laughs. "The Shadow must always be there, but very often the heart of the stories is these other people."

Most of the reactions to Jones' version of the pulp vigilante have been positive, he happily reports, but he enjoys hearing reactions from the other side as well.

"It's funny, but the sides seem to be to the extreme [in comparing Jones' version to the recent Andy Helfer/Kyle Baker series]. The people who flat out hated the Helfer/Baker version because they felt it violated *their* Shadow tend to like mine and think I've supposedly saved him. These are usually people really into the pulps. Then, I hear from people who really like the Helfer/Baker stuff and think I'm just trying to do the same thing everyone else has been doing for the last 50 years. They usually have seen the covers and *haven't* picked the book up. I think I've found a balance between the old stuff with a new attitude. But a great deal of emotion gets involved in this character."

Emotion was also involved with the cancellation of Jones' series *El Diablo*, although those feelings favored disappointment more than joy. Ten issues into its run, DC found the title's sales figures "not up to standard" and stopped it with #16.

"It's hard to get angry at anybody. I'm disappointed that it died. I feel like I got off to a shaky start. I didn't really like my first three issues, which may have contributed to its demise. I'm sure early opinion on it wasn't all that great. I wish I had started stronger because there are a whole bunch of stories I'll never get to tell now. I can't think of any place to focus anger. I do feel that DC marketing could have given it a bigger push, but I'm sure many writers feel that way after something doesn't sell."

Jones does credit DC with giving the book what he says was a good run. He reveals the company waited for 10 issues before making the decision and when he asked for two extra issues to finish out his last storyline, DC agreed. But Jones contends much of the problem may have been due to him. He couldn't decide exactly how to treat the character.

"[Editor] Brian Augustyn wanted to take an old DC character and revamp it. El Diablo was an old Western character from the '70s, a Bob Kanigher character. Many of the ideas [in updating El Diablo] came from Brian, so I was sort of co-creator with him. It started out as a six-part thing in *Action Weekly*, but then *Action Weekly* got cancelled and somehow we got the go-ahead to do an ongoing series.

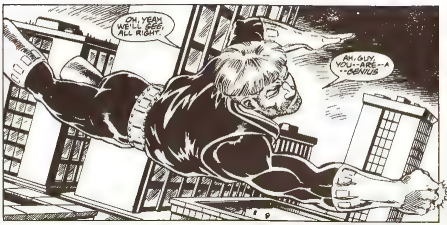
"My original intent was to explore whether such a thing as a masked,

YOU'D FIGURE IT WOULD BE FOR A GREAT CASE, RIGHT? MASS MURDER, SMUGGLING, COUNTERFEIT CDS. BUT NO.
IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF A LEFT-HANDED 1962 FENDER STRATOCASTER WITH A HUMBUCKING PICK-UP AND A MAPLE NECK.

Ford Fairlane Art: Copyright 1988 20th Century Fox

Fairlane Art: Carmine Infantino & Russell Braun/Ben Heck & Frank Springer

Actually, Jones can identify with the rock and roll detective. When he agreed to the assignment, he had no idea he would have to provide a four-issue, all-new "secret origin" for *Ford Fairlane*.



Green Lantern Art: Pat Broderick/Bruce Patterson

costumed vigilante could exist and what he might be in the real world. Then, it evolved; I saw no point in pursuing that because you can't do that in an ongoing series. What I ended up doing were these contemporary, urban fables. That's how I felt about them—little stories with a realistic feel illuminating particular problems of modern life."

Jones says he doesn't think DC will attempt revamping the series in the near future, and if they do, he doesn't think he'll be asked to return. But if given a chance, Jones would like to do a one-shot or an annual.

"I just have to cut the cord, let him go. I'm glad I did it. I learned some things as a writer and had a good time and created some characters I'm very fond of. Maybe we'll get Hector Enriquez to pop up in *Green Lantern*," he jokes.

El Diablo Art: Mike Parobeck/John Roberts

"Guy Gardner is a fun recent thing," Gerard Jones admits, "but not something to whom I have this infantile connection."

Last summer, the book took a turn toward the intense as Lester went in search of his roots and the adventures became more intellectually oriented.

"I hear some people say they're disappointed that it's too quiet. And then I hear some people say they're glad we've found a coherence for it, a forward motion instead of just jokes. I don't think you can sustain that pace

Bored by the way he has been previously depicted, Jones promises to "make John Stewart more human."

On the positive side, Jones—along with co-creator Will Jacobs—is writing himself into the Hollywood scene with the Jones/Jacobs screenplay for their popular Eternity series *The Trouble With Girls* and Jones' four-part comics prequel to *Ford Fairlane*.

Jones claims that despite his workload, he's still true to writing the exploits of Lester Girls. Upcoming changes involve the book's tone. When *Girls* started, it was a wacky parody adventure series based on the impossibly good, improbably strong, remarkably sexy Lester Girls and his band of friends and followers: Apache Dick (his closest pal), Maxie Scoops (a reporter looking for a good story) and the Foster kids (Lester's troublesome nephews) as well as a host of nasty persons led by the Lizard Lady.

El Diablo just couldn't capture as many fans as he could crooks. "I'm disappointed that it died," Jones admits, but "I'm glad I did it."

of joke-joke-joke. We *had* to go the way that we went. Things that are all funny and no story rarely last very long. Either the creators go dead or the readers figure they can always wait for the next issue. We're trying to endure, basically. If and when the movie comes out, it might help us. Right now, it's a matter of white knuckling it."

Jones and Jacobs are currently revising the live-action film's screenplay which will then be passed around among 20th Century Fox studio executives.

"The development VP is really excited about it. It's at least going to be shown to actors and directors, and if they can line up a crew, they might actually shoot this thing."

As for the comic series, the book will go bi-monthly in November. "It was a group decision. We're keeping the same crew, still 12 issues a year, only we'll have some mini-series included and other special stuff."

Of *Ford Fairlane*, the four-issue

All Green Lantern & El Diablo Characters & Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989, 1990 DC Comics Inc

mini-series to introduce comedian Andrew Dice Clay's private detective movie. Jones says, "The project is fine, but it grew out of a misunderstanding. I thought they were asking me for a movie adaptation. It turned out to be four original scripts leading up to the movie. Suddenly, I was writing four comics for which I hadn't budgeted time. But I got them done and they seemed to please everybody. I could've said no, but I felt kind of silly."

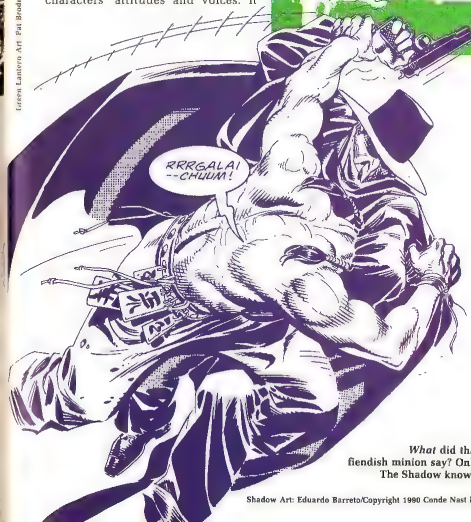
Jones didn't have to meet "the Diceman" himself to get the position ("I can live without that pleasure, thank you," he notes) but won approval from Fox after the studio read samples of his work sent by DC.

"They seemed to think I had the balance of humor and action that they wanted. I think it was *The Shadow Strikes!* that convinced them. This will introduce the movie. If the comic takes off or the movie is a monster hit, they *may* want me to follow up with more exploitation.

"It was an interesting challenge. I've worked with other people's characters before, but even then, I have a free hand to figure out how I want the character to talk and what I want them to do. In this case, working from a script and having to lead up to a movie, I really had to duplicate these characters' attitudes and voices. It

Green Lantern Art: Pat Broderick/Bruce Patterson

"Hal was the one I read as a kid," the writer says, "the one who jazzed me up."



***What* did that fiendish minion say? Only The Shadow knows.**

Shadow Art: Eduardo Barreto/Copyright 1990 Conde Nast Publications, Inc

was kind of fun, but it was hard not to let it break down into parody, making fun of the material. But I liked the screenplay [by Dan Waters of *Heathers* fame] a lot so I was able to imitate something I liked. If I had gotten a lame-ass script...I don't know."

Aside from all of this, fans will also be able to pick up Jones' work in a *Marvel Comics Presents* back-up story featuring Shanna the She-Devil (with art by Paul Gulacy), a storyline in *Batman* (featuring Mark Badger's artwork), the dialogue in *Justice League Europe* ("Yeah, I'm going for some of the easy money," he admits), a new series of *The Big Prize* by Innovation Comics under the new title of *Time Drifter*, possibly a graphic novel of *The Score*, the rest of his and Will Jacobs' *Tommy and the Monsters* and just maybe even that book on sitcoms.

"In between everything, I just have to keep my mind on one thing at a time," Gerard Jones says. "By this summer, I should have the time to take a short vacation before I get started again. It's crazy, but I have to admit, it has been fun."

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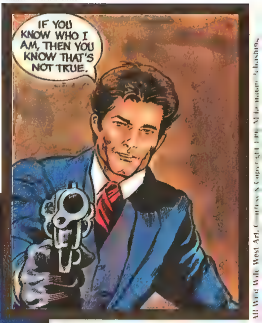
Color: Melissa Ellis



All Wild Wild West Art & Images © Copyright 1999 Millennium Publishing

Agents James West & Artemus Gordon again face "The Night of the Four-Color Terror."

By TOM WEAVER

It has been more than 20 years since James West and Artemus Gordon of the United States Secret Service defended our fruited plains in the weekly TV series *The Wild Wild West*, but just hum a few bars of that unforgettable music or brandish your ultra-rare *Wild West* toy "sleeve gun," and four seasons' worth of memories come rushing back for any self-respecting baby boomer.

Unlike most 1960s Western series, *Wild West* simply refuses to drop down the Memory Hole; there was a certain magic about the show and its futuristic gadgetry, the flamboyant villains and bare-knuckled action, and great chemistry between West (Robert Conrad) and Gordon (Ross Martin), probably the only two honest agents working in the monumentally corrupt Ulysses S. Grant administration. The series came to an ignominious end in 1969, nudged off the air at the height of its popularity by grandstanding congressmen and pressure groups rallying against TV violence, but it remains a bit in syndication. Despite two TV movie follow-ups that leaned heavily toward unwanted comedy, the show's fan following remains undiminished.

Color: Melissa Ellis

Mark Ellis, Florida-based writer of Innovation Comics' *The Justice Machine*, and partner Paul Davis are currently working to combine their longtime passion for *Wild West* and their interest in historical research into a full-color four-issue *Wild West* comic book mini-series. Ellis and Davis (a business writer for the *Providence Journal* in Rhode Island) have recently formed a new comics company called Millennium Publishing with *Wild West* set as the outfit's flagship title. Negotiations with Viacom International (owners of *Wild West*) began in November 1989, and, with the rights to publish a comics version of the popular show now in hand, production on the four-issue series commenced in January.

Describing himself with the useful

Color: Melissa Ellis

West faces "The Night of the Iron Tyrants" in the Millennium Comics mini-series.

euphemism "thirtysomething," Ellis, who has also written *Star Rangers*, *Ninja Elite*, *Warriors* and *Death Hawk*, explains the idea's genesis: "In a real circuitous way, it started with Archie Comics' Spectrum line. When they were trying to get their old characters together again, the editor contacted me to come up with a couple of proposals. One of them was *The Web*. Then, of course, Archie's Spectrum line imploded, and I was left with this proposal I liked a whole lot, but the only way it would work was with some kind of familiar, established character. So while I was sitting in my office, staring vacantly off into space, my eyes lit on the spine of a book I just bought, a book on *The Wild West*—and the penny dropped. I thought it would be great for a comic book adaptation, because it had all the elements: the crazy villains, the gadgets, the plots that always had to do with some kind of apocalyptic thing happening."

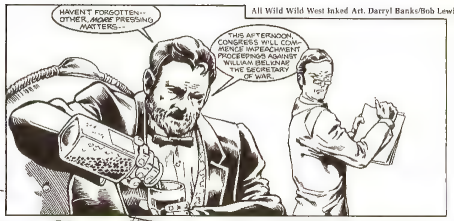
He brought the idea to the attention of David Campiti, publisher of Innovation, but when Campiti was cool to the suggestion, Ellis put his notion temporarily aside. "A couple months later, my wife Melissa and I were in New England visiting Paul, and I was telling him all my horror stories about being a freelancer in the comics business. And Paul said, 'Well, the three of us combined have about 30 years' experience in publishing and printing, graphics and what-have-you; why don't we start our *own* company?' That's when we decided to go after *The Wild Wild West*, and we got it. The rest, I guess, is still history-in-the-making."

Aside from the part that nostalgia played in their thinking, another aspect of the Davis-Ellis decision to go with *Wild West* was based on economic realities and the kind of hard facts that a fledgling company must face. "Obviously, an independent can't compete with Marvel and DC as far as superheroes and related genres—they've got 50 years worth of characters!" says Ellis. "But I have noticed that adaptations from other media—*ALIENS*, *Predator*, even Innovation's *The Vampire Lestat*—were doing quite well. Then, when I saw how great [Now's comic book] *The Green Hornet* did, I couldn't understand why because I didn't think much of it. My feeling about *The Green Hornet* [CS#10] is, the people who were buying that comic weren't buying it because they remembered the radio show or the serials. Since the TV show lasted one year, and it's not in syndication, I think most people's exposure to the Green Hornet was that time he and Kato appeared on [TV's] *Batman*! If *The Green Hornet* could do so well, what about something like *Wild West*? There's really nothing out there like it in comics."

For Darryl Banks, illustrator of such comics as *Cyberpunk*, *Hero Alliance* and *The Justice Machine*, being asked to work as artist on the *Wild West* books is a bit ironic. "My first published work dealt with a futuristic story, and my second story was a superhero thing that took place in the present. Now I'm doing a comic that deals with the past. I guess my *next* series will deal with the Stone Age!"

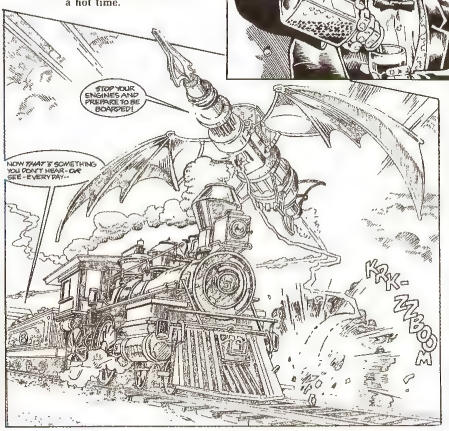
"My original intent was basically just to do a continuation of the TV series," Ellis explains, "but Paul very perceptively pointed out that that's what a company hadn't recently tried with *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and it didn't go anywhere. If we were going to spend all this money to get the property, let's do something very special with it. Let's do something like the equivalent of *The Wild Wild West: The Motion Picture*, and make it elaborate and epic-proportioned. *Not* do stuff that you could do on TV! So, we're going more into the political air of the time. The year 1876 was very interesting in American history, a watershed year. It was Ulysses S. Grant's last year as president: it was the era of the robber barons; it was also the year of Little Big Horn, which

was the last gasp of Plains Indian resistance. So, it was like the demarcation point between the Frontier and the Industrial Age. It was also the year they had the Centennial


HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN... OTHER, MORE PRESSING MATTERS...
THIS AFTERNOON CONGRESS WILL COMMENCE IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS AGAINST WILLIAM BELKNAP, THE SECRETARY OF WAR.

All Wild West Inked Art, Darryl Banks/Bob Lewis

Loveless' airships allow the Knights of the Golden Circle to give West and Gordon (and their specially built train) a hot time.



All Wild West Pencil Art, Darryl Banks

This new comic is set in 1876, the last year of Ulysses S. Grant's presidency.

Many fans would feel that no *Wild West* adventure would be complete without an appearance by wily arch-villain Dr. Miguelito Loveless, and Ellis is happy to point out that the bad doctor has also been shoehorned into his plot. "The Knights have enlisted Loveless for his technical expertise—to come up with these advanced airships, handheld Gatling gun-type weapons, and these guys that are called the Iron Knights who are like enforcers. Of course, *this* stuff has *no* historical basis! And, naturally, Loveless is doing one of his classic double-crosses: He wants West and Gordon involved, he sets it up so they

That arch-villain, Dr. Miguelito Loveless, returns—looking just like Michael Dunn. Millennium has the rights to use the late actor's likeness.

Celebration, and a huge forerunner to the World's Fair, the Philadelphia Exhibition, where all sorts of technological breakthroughs were showcased for the first time. So, we're using that, basically, as the centerpiece."

According to Ellis, his script (titled "The Night of the Iron Tyrants") can be summed up by a statement made by Benjamin Disraeli, long-ago Prime Minister of England: "The world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes." "Iron Tyrants" (co-plotted by Ellis and Davis, scripted by Ellis) is based on historical facts, some of them evidenced, some strictly conjecture. History's rumor mill would have us believe that a cadre of conspirators orchestrated the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and it's this group, the Knights of the Golden Circle, that Jim West's new full-color adventures involves.

Over their back fences, historians also gossip that, contrary to many reports, Lincoln-killer John Wilkes Booth did *not* die in a gunfight in that historic Virginia barn, and Ellis is tapping into this curious piece of scuttlebutt as well. "One of the things that's a mystery to this day is that the man they shot in the barn [supposedly Booth] didn't look like him, according to many people, and he was buried very, very quickly, before anybody else could get a *good* look! The only thing that linked this man in the barn to Booth was Booth's diary—but 18 pages of it were missing, and were never recovered! Our four-issue storyline is all connected, and the 18 missing pages is the McGuffin for the first couple of issues. West and Gordon are trying to find those 18 pages and so are these Knights of the Golden Circle." Ellis isn't above a bit of historical name-dropping, and among the jingoistic Knights are such immortal figures as Boss Tweed, George Armstrong Custer, Jay Gould and others. "I'm afraid we're going to offend many people by making some of these guys seem like real S.O.B.s, but in my opinion they *were* S.O.B.s. They're dead, they're 100 years old, they can't sue anybody!" he laughs.

I'M JAMES WEST. THIS IS ARTEMUS GORDON.
THE REAL ARTEMUS GORDON!
I RECOGNIZE THEATRICAL MAKE-UP WHEN I SEE IT SIR.
©1998 Wild West Photos & Characters Copyright 1998 Viacom International Inc.

Writer Ellis, co-plotter Paul Davis and artist Darryl Banks aimed for an epic feel for their *Wild Wild West*. They did "not want to do stuff you could do on TV," Ellis explains.

get involved, but for his own purposes. He doesn't want these Knights in charge of the country any more than West and Gordon do, but he has his own fish to fry, so to speak." Ellis' one regret is that Loveless doesn't interact with West and Gordon until the third issue, "and now I wish I had brought him in sooner because the interplay has been a delight to write. He's on stage before then, but he just doesn't confront West and Gordon."

Other *Wild West* regulars crop up in Ellis' story as well, even though Millennium can contractually use only the likenesses of Robert Conrad, Ross Martin and Michael Dunn (Dr. Loveless). Lovely Antoinette and the towering Voltaire, both part of Loveless' TV entourage, will make appearances, and so will Colonel Richmond, the smarmy officer who handed out West and Gordon's assignments on the weekly series. "Colonel Richmond meets a rather *grisly* fate," Ellis confides, in a voice dripping with satisfaction. "I never *did* like him!"

When Ellis and Davis initially mapped out their *Wild West* storyline, "we decided up front that there was no point in doing this if we couldn't do it right," Ellis affirms. "We had to have good production values, it had to be in color, it had to be on good quality paper, we had to get a good artist with a track record and so on." True to their stated intentions, Ellis and Davis have rounded up some tried-and-true comics collaborators: Ellis' wife Melissa, a well-known graphic illustrator and commercial artist in the Tampa Bay area, is the color colorist/art director for the series and Bob Lewis, former Adventure and Americomics embellisher, will ink.

Darryl Banks wasn't among the legion of *Wild West* fans during the series' first run, but he is enjoying the experience of discovering the show and illustrating the books. "My style leans toward likenesses, and being able to tackle a property such as *The Wild Wild West* presents a challenge: to make the characters recognizable enough for anyone who was a series fan. President Grant makes some appearances in here—*not* the most flattering appearances—and I have reference for [the real-life Grant's] facial features as well. John Wilkes Booth plays a part in the series, but in the first issue, he's in disguise. I have a

(continued on page 60)

LIVE FAST.
LOVE HARD.
DIE WITH YOUR MASK ON.

BRATPACK

INDUSTRIAL STRENGTH SUPERHUMANS
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GRAY

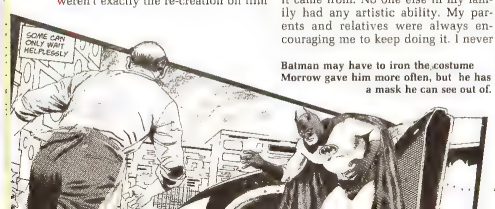
The days of lurid movie campaigns and grisly movie art are all behind us now; the entire industry relies more and more upon snappy photo compositions and perfectly exposed mugs to entice the theatergoer or video renter. Tis' a pity as it was one of those ghastly pieces of art that suckered fans into theaters some 20 years ago to see *Brain of Blood*. Terrible film, but what a poster! A mad doctor zapping a hideous creature menacing a young heroine. And it was none other than comic vet Gray Morrow whose flair for the sensational conned youngsters out of the admission price.

A scenic journey through New Jersey's Delaware Water Gap and the trails of Pennsylvania's Catskills takes one to the artist's current residence, comfortably settled on 14 acres of wooded beauty, which he shares with his wife, Pocho. An engraved wooden sign greets all, declaring this is Camelot. Two buildings occupy the picturesque landscape, one being the artist's studio. Inside, the walls are covered; original art by the genre giants stun the eyes. This *is* Camelot!

Unquestionably one of the premier science-fiction artists for three decades, Morrow's distinctive style was a natural progression from a wondrous childhood spent in his birthplace of Fort Wayne, Indiana during the 1930s and '40s.

"I don't know if anyone remembers *Holiday* magazine but it chose Fort Wayne as the most typical American city," the pipe-smoking Morrow smiles. "It was an ideal childhood. My father was a veterinarian and at one point owned a riding academy, which gave me a great interest in horses and characters that involved themselves with horses. I met real deputy sheriffs, rodeo cowboys and these larger-than-life people.

"The local eye-strain was the State Theater. I would cut lawns for 50 cents and just couldn't wait to spend it to see *Captain Marvel, Flash Gordon, Spy Smasher*. To me, it was *unbelievable* seeing these things on the screen. Of course, I was disappointed because these guys might have had bags in their tights and weren't exactly the re-creation on film



Batman may have to iron the costume Morrow gave him more often, but he has a mask he can see out of.

Art. Gray Morrow/Don Kraar/Trademark & Copyright 1984 Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc.

He explored Tarzan's jungle and tamed the Wild West in his search for high adventure.

of the two-dimensional characters. *But who cared?* They were moving and alive."

Inevitably, the tale that rattles every fan's nerves most is uttered. "I always read the Sunday funnies," Morrow grins. "And aside from the movies, I spent my money on comic books. As soon as a pile got higher than my knee, my mother would throw them out! You never thought anything about it because there were always more. I never thought of myself as a collector."

Morrow's ability with a pen made itself known early on. Inspired by what he read and saw, "I found myself doodling and copying everything," the artist reflects. "I don't know where it came from. No one else in my family had any artistic ability. My parents and relatives were always encouraging me to keep doing it. I never

Tarzan is something I loved as a kid," notes Gray Morrow. "I never dreamed I would work on it."

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Art: Courtesy Sam Sherman

"On the campaign for *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*, Sam Sherman said, 'Lots of drip, Gray,' " Morrow recalls. "He needed blood and drip."

Art: Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

Morrow

By TIM FERRANTE

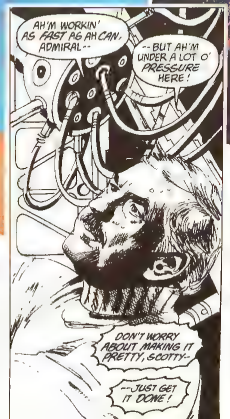
Photo Tim Ferrante

had any realistic idea of doing anything with it until I was in high school. Before that, I wanted to be a district attorney!"

Having no formal training and enrolling in feeble high school art classes, Morrow began to sense he was destined for the art world. He just didn't know how or where he would fit. "As soon as I graduated, I took off for Chicago because it was the nearest large city. I hadn't a clue on what a portfolio was or how to present yourself as an artist. My first job was working in the bullpen of the second largest ad agency in the city. I was to prepare art for presentation to various clients, which translates to nothing more than matting and framing other people's work."

"When it comes to sitting in front of a blank piece of paper, I want to do more than draw a pretty picture," says Gray Morrow. "I want to tell a story."

Photo Tim Ferrante


AH'M WORKIN' AS FAST AS AH CAN, ADMIRAL--
--BUT AH'M UNDER A LOT O' PRESSURE HERE!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT MAKING IT PRETTY, SCOTTY--
--JUST GET IT DONE!

Morrow has already served several times with the *Enterprise* crew, and the results of his latest mission with them appear in this year's *Star Trek Annual*.

Star Trek Art. Copyright 1986 Paramount Pictures/DC Comics

In an era of comic art icons, Morrow's influences and inspirations were diverse. "Obviously, I loved Alex Raymond and Hal Foster. On the other end of the scale, I loved people like Virgil Partch, one of the greatest gag cartoonists of the '40s. We rave today about Gary Larson, but Partch did things that Larson couldn't approach—completely mad, way-out stuff. I can appreciate Larson and his bizarre touch, but I still draw from my influences in the '30s and '40s."

A residual effect of the framing job was Morrow's opportunity to see how the pros worked, something which opened new venues for his growth as an artist. "Having done cartoons for the high school paper and local ad companies, the agency job showed me what the real world was like,' Morrow assesses while relighting his pipe. "The comics were what I really wanted to do, but here was another area I hadn't investigated."

After three lessons with the Famous Artists Course correspondence school and two months of attending the Chicago Academy of Fine Art, where Morrow was told his talents needed no help and to get out in the field and start working, he moved to New York City. "This was during the period of the Comics Code formation and William Gaines being on trial. The word 'horror' was dirty and comics were in such low regard. I worked for a half-dozen or so comic companies before they went under. At the time, Marvel was known as Timely and they were putting out things with words like 'adventure,' 'suspense and 'mystery' in the title. Just don't call it horror!" he laughs. "I knew the military was going to be drafting me soon, so I didn't try to set up any permanent relations with the publishers, especially the way they were folding.

"There was a strange little outfit called Triangle that specialized in fantasy fiction. They were printing a lot of Robert E. Howard's stuff and were doing poorly with it. They decided to see what could be done with Conan in comic-book form. I had never heard of Conan before, so they gave me Howard's 'Tower of the Elephant' and told me to come up with a comic based on it. It was the first appearance of Conan in comic-book form. The problem was they *never* printed the comic," Morrow winces. "I got paid for it, but today, it must be sitting on a shelf somewhere getting moldy."

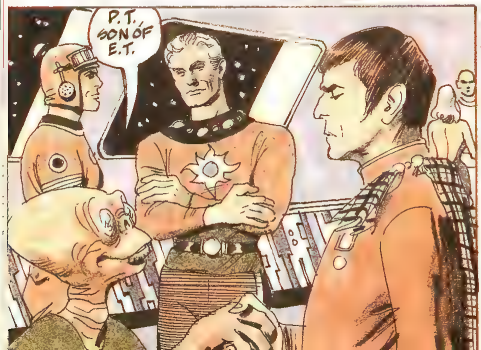
All was quiet in Korea during Morrow's stay, courtesy of the United States Army. "In the military, I took up painting. Having had no previous instruction, I just started on my own. I gathered some nice Chinese brushes and materials that were foreign to me and started painting on my off-hours. Suddenly, I began getting commis-

"*Dreamwalker* was a chance to do a '30s character like The Shadow," says Morrow.

Photo, Tom Ferrante

Thanks to the Army, Morrow began painting, although his subjects have hardly been standard regulation issue.

All Art Texas Morrow



Art Copyright 1988 Corbett Morrow

A meeting of minds you're not likely to find in the monthly *Star Trek* comic.

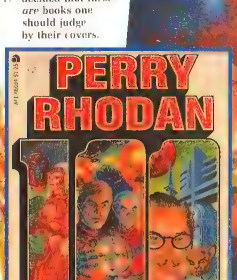
Dreamwalker Art Trademark & Copyright 1988 Marvel Entertainment Group

sions from officers for my work to decorate their quarters. Most of the requests were for naked ladies," Morrow chuckles. "For myself, I did high adventure stuff. The officers would pay me by assigning light duty. I painted everything from insignias on helmet liners to designing day rooms. I did everything except carry a gun!"

Choosing civilian life over a career with Uncle Sam, Morrow returned to New York City.

"Science fiction and fantasy were what I enjoyed most so I took a crack at illustration," the artist comments.

After actually reading the Perry Rhodan novels on which he worked, Morrow decided that these *are* books one should judge by their covers.



Art: Ace Books

Photo: Tim Ferrante

"My friend Angelo Torres introduced me to several people and I started drawing for *Cracked* magazine and Gilberton Publishing, better known as [the original] *Classics Illustrated*. Basically, I'm a storyteller," Morrow notes, switching over from pipe to cigar and leaning on his drawing board. "I'm not a very verbal person in society, but when it comes to sitting in front of a blank piece of paper, I want to do more than draw a pretty picture. I want to tell a story.

"At Gilberton, the contributing artists were not considered important. It was company policy not to sign your work. Al Williamson, Reed Crandall, Angelo Torres all did illustrating, but it then became *Classics* material. They would give you a script and allow you to do pretty much what you wanted."

The Bobbs Merrill Company in Indiana enlisted Morrow's talent to illustrate over 50 children's books. The call of the paint brush remained and cover painting assignments were plentiful. "Science fiction and fantasy were what I enjoyed most so I took a crack at illustration. I was already doing interior work for *Galaxy*, *If*..., *Amazing*, *Worlds of Tomorrow* and conned them into letting me do some of their covers. This was my first published color work.

"Somewhere during that period, Russ Jones told me of a magazine starting up that would bypass the Comics Code. The magazine was *Creepy* and the company was Warren Publishing. Jim Warren was a crazy man, a fun man. You never knew if he would like something you did or hate it or make a scene when you brought it in. He used to give year-end parties to celebrate another year of publishing. He was quite flamboyant," Morrow recollects fondly. "Around that time, Forry Ackerman [editor of *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine and creator of *Vampirella*] was agenting the popular Perry Rhodan book series. Ace Books bought them up and for a while, they sold like crazy. I was hired to do the cover paintings, up to three a month. I'll never understand why they sold because I sat down and tried to read them and frankly, I thought they were god-awful!"

Comments Morrow, "It's interesting. During all the late nights, the coffee and bullshit sessions, the booze sessions, we all felt we were working in a vacuum and that nobody gave a damn about what we were doing. We were basically working for ourselves and by and large, felt lucky we were able to do just that. Myself, Angelo, Al Williamson, Wally Wood; we would all get together and curse the publishers for not letting us have our own copyrights to produce our own stuff. We would draw the assignments, hand them in and cash the checks. But when we would get together, we would draw things that amused *us*."

Morrow also found employment as a ghost artist on a variety of daily strips. "Johnny Prentice was illustrating *Rip Kirby* and he, being a social animal, wanted time away. He used to average only a daily a day which kept him from his socializing and golf playing. I wound up doing three weeks out of a month for about two years. I ghosted one week of *Prince Valiant* when Hal Foster decided to retire. The syndicate wanted to keep the strip running and asked Foster to decide on who would continue in his wake. I was nominated, Wally Wood, John Cullen Murphy. Unbeknownst to the rest of us, Murphy was Hal Foster's neighbor and it was a foregone conclusion that he would continue the strip. Foster had only been going through the motions to satisfy the syndicate.

"I worked on *Friday Foster* when the regular artist was chronically late and causing cancellations from some papers. Originally an Alex Raymond daily, *Secret Agent X-9* was drawn for years by Al Williamson and I ghosted for him on occasion using his style. *Big Ben Bolt* was a prize fighter strip I ghosted in an on-again off-again arrangement."

Through mutal friend Alan Barbour, Morrow was introduced to exploitation filmmaker Samuel M. Sherman (FANGORIA #29) whose Independent-International Pictures was feeding the hungry drive-in circuits. Sherman was in need of an exceptional artist whose craft could heighten and excite the moviegoing public. "I think 90%of my movie poster work was for Sam Sherman," Morrow explains. "He had a problem with a previous artist who hung him up terribly. On the campaign for *Frankenstein's Bloody Terror*, Sam said, 'Lots of drip, Gray.' He needed blood and drip."

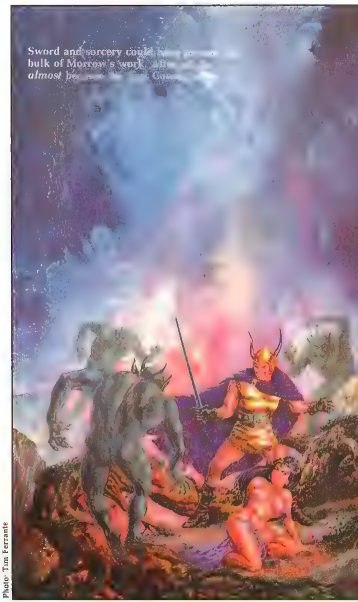


Photo: Tim Ferrante

Producer Sherman vividly remembers the days of campaign design and Morrow's special flair for the weird and bizarre. "I always felt it was important that the advertising look good and be attractive," Sherman observes. "We started using still photographs but they were never as effective as someone doing a really good painting. Gray Morrow was terrific with action, horror and science fiction. I had him do our ads, posters and color brochures. I guess his art for *Dracula vs. Frankenstein* is the most famous one we have. He did a sensational job because he lent a little more fantasy to the subject than actually existed in the film. He has done most of our art over the years." The Independent-International Morrow gallery includes posters for films like *Midnight, Angels' Wild Women, Frankenstein's Bloody Terror, Blazing Stewardesses, Nurses For Sale* and *Space Mission to the Lost Planet*.

With such a plethora of subjects and countless pages of output, what pleases Gray Morrow? "I think I've done a good Tarzan," Morrow asserts. "I take a lot of pride in that because I think it's a difficult thing to do well," referring to his eight-year stint on the once weekly strip. "The writer, Don Kraar, has done a remarkable job in transforming the story into the comic format. It's something I loved as a kid. I never dreamed I would have the opportunity to work on it.

"Something I recently did for Marvel, the *Dreamwalker* graphic novel, was a chance to do a sort of throwback to a '30s character like The Shadow. I didn't have to adhere to a pre-conceived structure. I could do it my own way. The book was written by [actors/comics scribes] Billy Mumy and Miguel Ferrer. They were specific in what they wanted and there are cameos by characters that look a lot like Jackie Gleason, Jose Ferrer [Miguel's father] and others."

Extinguishing his cigar and contemplating another round with his pipe, a smile snakes across Morrow's lips. "You know, thinking back to Timely...Williamson and I used to get a lot of Western scripts that were written by Stan Lee. In his scripts, whether it was the sheriff, the homesteader, the banker or whoever's wife, she was always named Martha. Stan seemed limited with Western names. We were all doing these comics so we started drawing Martha exactly the same. We gave her a bonnet so you couldn't really see her face. Stan never got wise that she looked *exactly* the same in different books and stories. We were waiting for him to pick up on it. We got a little more ballsy

(continued on page 65)

By TOM WEAVER

When the long-awaited Warren Beatty *Dick Tracy* premieres, a legion of young moviegoers will probably assume that this is the first time the classic comic strip crimebuster has reached the silver screen. Their mistake is understandable. Since minor black-and-white films have been banished from most TV markets, it would take something of a film buff among younger viewers to remember that the jut-jawed Chester Gould character was practically a mainstay at the Saturday afternoon matinees of the 1930s and '40s, impeccably played by the dashing Ralph Byrd.

At the time, the serials were in their heyday, and comics heroes like the Lone Ranger, Flash Gordon, Captain America and others were great grist for the serial mills. The best serials by far were being made by Republic Pictures, the low-budget studio which specialized in Westerns and action films.

But when the studio approached Famous Artists Syndicate in 1936 about the possibility of adapting the pen-and-ink detective to the movies, heads of the organization were cool to the idea of entrusting the character to

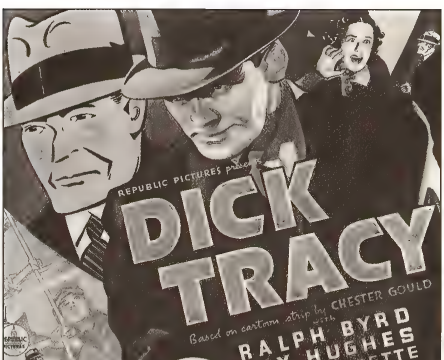


Photo Courtesy Dan Scapperotti.

Crimestopper's Heritage

For decades, Dick Tracy has battled the bad guys in serials, movies, TV shows & cartoons.

Republic. The syndicate would have preferred to turn the property over to Universal (Flash Gordon and Secret Agent X-9 were comics-based heroes then battling their way through Universal chapterplays) or Columbia (which had not even yet begun their slate of serial productions). Republic honchos persevered, and after weeks of touch-and-go negotiations, finally secured film rights to Gould's hero.

Following standard Hollywood operating procedure, the first thing Republic did was to make a number of modifications in the Tracy persona and eliminate some of the strip's key characters. No longer a humble police detective, the Republic Dick Tracy became a key operative in the FBI's San Francisco branch. His comic strip sweetheart Tess Trueheart and sidekick Pat Patton were jettisoned, replaced by secretary Gwen Andrews (a non-love interest) and bumbling second banana Mike McGurk. The lone carryover in the supporting ranks was Junior, a homeless waif whom Tracy takes under his wing.

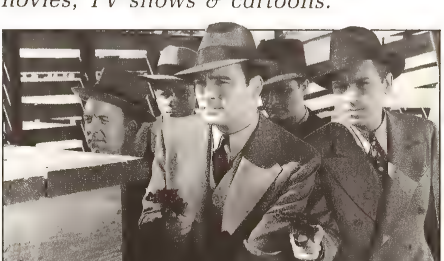


Photo Courtesy Dan Scapperotti.

Dick Tracy Returns **with his men for more serial action, something his comic strip foes never did.**

If serialgoers of 1937 were disappointed by the liberties that Republic took in bringing Tracy to the screen, there was plenty of compensation in the character of the Lame One. Tracy's adversary throughout the 15 action-filled installments. A screen grotesque every bit as cruel and repellent as the miscreants that populated the Gould strip, the Lame One (alternately called the Spider) was a brilliant

As Tracy's faithful secretary Gwen, the former Phylis Isley helped Ralph Byrd capture America's enemies. As Jennifer Jones, though, the actress captured an Oscar for herself years later.

criminal mastermind worthy of a full-fledged horror movie.

Linked with his master not only in their evil pursuits but also by a physical bond of equal deformity, the Spider's second-in-command was the sinister Moloch, a slimy hunchbacked gargoyle perverting medical science for malevolent ends. Acting on his master's instructions, Moloch performs a delicate brain operation on Tracy's abducted attorney-brother Gordon, making him a mindless, fiercely loyal slave to the Lame One. (Actor Richard Beach played the "normal" Gordon in Chapter 1 while Carleton Young took on the role of the evil Gordon.) Now complete with a new face and a streak of white through his dark hair, Gordon became the Lame One's most trustworthy agent, taking on Tracy and his fellow agents in the remaining episodes.

The Lame One's criminal capers ranged from the bizarre (Gordon's brain operation) to the mundane (fur smuggling, a jewel theft, kidnappings) to the spectacular: The criminal kingpin and his minions did most of their gallivanting in the Flying Wing, a futuristic airborne contrivance which nudges *Dick Tracy* over the line into science fiction. Equipped with a fearsome sonic device capable of mass destruction, the Flying Wing's initial target is the Golden Gate Bridge, which nearly vibrates itself to pieces in an early cliffhanging ending.

Another notable cliffhanger shows Tracy in pursuit of the Spider's men in a high-speed boat chase, following the villains' boat between two giant moored ocean vessels (the two large ships slowly drift together, trapping and crushing Tracy's boat between them)—a sequence repeated in 1989's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*.

Dick Tracy is entertaining but flawed: Republic had not yet perfected its serial formula, and *Dick Tracy* contains some voguish and distracting elements which would fall by the wayside in future chapterplays. Annoying scenes of comedy relief slow the action (Mike McGurk, played by Smiley Burnette, is particularly offensive), there's a small boy (Junior) involved to invite the envy of the younger moviegoers, and the pacing at times is ponderous (clocking in at just under five hours. *Dick Tracy* is Republic's *longest* serial). But even if the studio was still feeling its way at this point, there's still plenty of excitement and suspense in *Dick Tracy*, as well as the just-right performance of stoic Ralph Byrd as the unflappable crimefighter.

Byrd is primarily remembered today as Tracy, and was the first Hollywood star to rise to fame through a resemblance to a cartoon strip character. Republic interviewed hundreds of Tracy wannabes, stars as well as extras, before selecting the Dayton, Ohio native (who edged out famed G-man Melvin Purvis in winning the role). An athletic six footer, Byrd toured with a stock company, spent a season on the legitimate stage and even sang with a band before journeying to Hollywood in 1933 and film-debuting in Universal's *Chinatown Squad* in '35. Then as now, too-close identification with a role presented a problem for Byrd, who became so well-known for his personification of Tracy that other roles were difficult to obtain.

Courtesy Photo Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

All Dick Tracy Characters Copyright 1990 [illegible] Media Services

With Tess (Anne Gwynne) in tow, *Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome* (Boris Karloff) and his fiendish henchman (Skelton Knaggs), and to tell the truth, the crime-buster isn't happy about it.

Less audacious in its plotting than the original *Dick Tracy*, but packed with more action, the unimaginatively-titled *Dick Tracy Returns* (1938) was Republic's post-haste follow-up to the immense popularity of the first Tracy serial. The eerie atmosphere of mystery that surrounded the Lame One couldn't be applied to the new serial's villains, gangster Pa Stark and his five larcenous sons, but what the Starks lacked in spooky weirdness was compensated for with acts of sadism, like pumping a young G-man full of bullets and then later disconnecting the power cord from the iron lung keeping the injured lawman alive. Platonic secretary Gwen, sidekick McGurk and tenacious junior rejoined Tracy for this new adventure, which saw the Stark gang eventually decimated. When Pa Stark (a switched-sex sort of Ma Barker, played by serial perennial Charles Middleton) finds himself the sole survivor of his own killer brood in Chapter 15, he confronts Tracy with vials of nitroglycerine strapped to each wrist, threatening to detonate them unless Tracy can stop him.

A horror element briefly rears its head again in *Dick Tracy's G-Men* (1939), the third stanza of the detective's serial career. Chapter One commences with the unspooling of a newsreel detailing the criminal exploits of Nicolas Zarnoff (Irving Pichel), a dastardly international spy, as well as his arrest by Tracy. Walking the last mile for his crimes, Zarnoff is gassed and the serial seemingly over before it has begun. But unbeknownst to the authorities, Zarnoff had ingested a "death potion" prior to his execution, and is summarily revived by henchmen.

Vowing to revenge himself on Tracy, Zarnoff embarks on the anticipated series of crimes, beginning by loading a remote-controlled motorboat with explosives and sending it speeding toward canal locks. Spotting the boat from the air, Tracy acrobatically dangles from the landing gear of a plane piloted by a fellow agent and drops into the boat. He destroys the remote-control equipment and grabs the landing gear of the plane as it buzzes the boat a second time, ascending to safety as the explosives detonate short of their intended target.

Dick Tracy's G-Men is easily the best of the first three Tracy serials. Comedy relief sequences are for the most part gone, and even Junior has apparently gone off to find his own way in the world. At times, the story lacks zip (too many long buildups to action scenes), and the miniatures and special FX are not up to Republic's later standards of excellence, but *G-Men* does have its share of exciting moments, great locations and imaginative cliffhangers. Byrd is his dependable self—all-business yet also quite personable—in his role as America's premier watchdog, and saturnine Irving Pichel, who divided his time between acting and directing (*The Most Dangerous Game*, *She*, *Destination Moon*), is a fine, low-key Zarnoff.

Dick Tracy took a year off in 1940, but not Ralph Byrd: He busied himself with minor parts in major pictures (*Northwest Mounted Police*, *The Son of Monte Cristo*, *The Howards of Virginia*) and major parts in minor ones. The over-identification with Tracy probably placed some hurdles in his path, but Byrd apparently took it all in stride. Articles about the actor in fan magazines seemed sincere in playing up his Mr. Nice Guy attitude, reporting Byrd's continuing involvement with the Boy Scouts of America and congratulating him for personally answering all fan mail.

Photo: Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

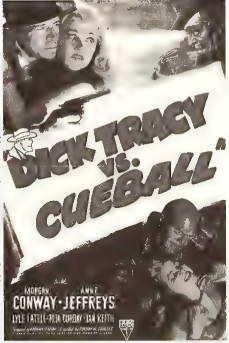
It's all-out war as *Dick Tracy vs. Crime, Inc.*, and the larcenous Lucifer (John Davidson) and his master, the masked Ghost, are busily marshalling their forces.

Crime Inc. Photo: Copyright (1941) RKO

Photo: Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

Finally brought to the screen by RKO to aid Ralph Byrd, old friends Tess Trueheart(Anne Jeffreys) and Vitamin Flintheart (Ian Keith) try to solve *Dick Tracy's Dilemma*.

Deadliest of the cinematic Tracy's many arch-rivals, the masked supervillain known as the Ghost was the detective's formidable foe in the fourth and final serial *Dick Tracy vs. Crime, Inc.* (1941). The Ghost was the brother of



Cueball Art Copyright 1946/RKO Courtesy Dan Scapperotti

The second time Morgan Conway hit the streets as Tracy, he put a stop to the crimes of Cueball (Dick Wessel), but afterwards, he turned in his badge.

"Rackets" Reagan, a killer-gangster sent to the hot seat by Tracy and a group of civic-minded businessmen known as the Secret Council of Eight. Sworn enemy of the men who convicted his brother, the Ghost not only has the advantage of secretly being a Council member, but he can also make himself invisible through the misdirected scientific genius of his right-hand man Lucifer. In one of the all-time great cliffhanger endings, the Ghost threatens to destroy Manhattan with a tidal wave, and when authorities fail to knuckle under to his extortion demands, Lucifer drops bombs on a fault line at the ocean bottom. Giant walls of water crash into the city, sweeping past the Statue of Liberty, lifting huge boats and toppling numerous buildings.

Failing to inundate the city, the Ghost proceeds with more earthly criminal endeavors like sabotage, hijacking and the murders of various Secret Councillors. Tracy deduces that the Ghost is a Council member, and when only two are left, he sets a clever trap. Disguised as an injured Ghost henchman who is liable to squeal, Tracy awaits the Ghost's invisible attack, and at the crucial moment switches on a special infrared bulb. In the ensuing scene (printed on negative film stock to show the bulb's "effect"), the Ghost becomes visible to Tracy and a giant fistfight between the two men begins. The Ghost temporarily bests the G-man and attempts to escape in what emerges as an unforgettable ending.

Dick Tracy vs. Crime, Inc. turned out to be the final Tracy serial, and in an unfortunate postscript, it was also the last time that Ralph Byrd ever worked for Republic, giving one cause to wonder if there isn't a great, untold Hollywood anecdote hiding somewhere here. After a four-year hiatus, however, the super-sleuth was back, starring in B pictures at RKO (the studio produced four Tracy adventures between 1945 and 1947). While the Republic serials took Tracy away from his workaday police rut (in *Crime, Inc.*, he was assistant to the director of the FBI!), the RKO *Tracys* put him back on his old beat and even worked hard to capture the strip's flavor.

Missing, unfortunately, was the man who had become the screen emblem for Dick Tracy. Ralph Byrd was gone, and in his place, RKO substituted stage and film actor Morgan Conway. Conway began his stage career in New York in 1930 and went to Hollywood to try his luck shortly thereafter; a founding member of the Screen Actors Guild, he divided his attention between films and stage for several years. Conway got his first shot at the role in 1945's *Dick Tracy*, co-starring Anne Jeffreys as girl friend Tess Trueheart, Lyle Latell as Pat Patton, Joseph Crehan as Chief Brandon and Mickey Kuhn as little Tracy Jr. In this kickoff entry, the chief menace was the hideous Splitface (Mike Mazurki, who, still active today, has a cameo in the Warren Beatty *Tracy*), whose face is gruesomely bisected by a long diagonal scar. Splitface murders three of the jury members who sent him to prison before kidnapping Tess and Junior; naturally, Tracy arrives in the proverbial nick of time. The film was an apparent success, as three follow-up Tracy pictures were made.

Grotesque antagonists and outrageous comic strip-style violence were hallmarks of the RKO series, and Dick Wessel measured up nicely in the villainy department in *Dick Tracy vs. Cueball* (1946). *Variety*'s reviewer questioned whether these new Tracy films (aimed at young audiences) weren't leaving themselves open for attack: *Dick Tracy vs. Cueball* was "peopled with a rogue's gallery of grotesque cutthroats and degenerates," featured a half-dozen well-defined strangulations and climaxed with the bald-wigged Wessel being flattened by a speeding freight train! Dispelling the somber mood, Ian Keith was an unwelcome addition to the cast, hamming untiringly as the strip's flamboyant Vitamin Flintheart.

Morgan Conway left the RKO Tracy series after two films and his replacement was the sunsibly-chosen Ralph Byrd. Conway retired from films shortly after *Cueball*, moving back to his home state of New Jersey. A '40s-vintage photo of Conway continued to appear in the New York *Players' Guide* right up through the 1970s, including his Cranford address and phone number. When film historian David Ragan phoned the actor looking for some additional career information to use in his book *Who's Who in Hollywood*, Conway muttered, "Check Screen Actors Guild," and hung up on him. Forgotten outside of the Tracy pictures, Conway died in 1981.

Everybody's favorite Tracy, Byrd tackled the role again in *Dick Tracy's Dilemma* (1947), the third RKO entry. This time around, he's faced with the task of breaking up a fur-stealing racket; the villain here is the aptly-

(continued on page 52)

Thanks to the bearded Zarnoff (Irving Pichel), the first agent through that door will be shot, forcing the others to fire blindly into the room! Will *Dick Tracy's G-Men* kill their own leader? Find out next week!

Guns blazing, the comic strip detective blasts the bad guys at a bijou near you.

DICK TRACY

By KYLE COUNTS

A producer serves many functions in Hollywood, and no one knows that better than Barrie Osborne. As *Dick Tracy*'s executive producer, Osborne quickly discovered that all his various skills would be needed in order to make the movie within the parameters established by both director Warren Beatty and the Disney Studios. "I did many different things on *Dick Tracy*," says the bearded, bespectacled Osborne in his office off Los Angeles' Mulholland Drive. "I helped develop the budget and figure out how to make the movie from a logistical standpoint—where should we film, what kinds of deals we should make, what kind of crew should we hire.

As Osborne explains it, outside of what's happening on the set itself, there are many details—specifically in the areas of consultation and decision-making—that require special handling. "For instance, Stephen Sondheim wrote three songs for the movie that Madonna performs in front of a group of chorus girls. So, the songs had to be prerecorded, we had to figure out how many dancers to use, the dance numbers had to be choreographed [by *A Chorus Line*'s Jeffrey Hornaday] and rehearsed, and Stephen [an East Coast resident] had to somehow get to Los Angeles.

"Since Warren was so tied up, I took responsibility for seeing that all that was done. [redacted] second unit photography, which we [redacted] with Bill and I even directed some of it, along with Billy Burton, our stunt coordinator, and Richard [*Broadcast News*] Marks, the editor."

Osborne attached himself to *Dick Tracy* only as recently as August 1988, so the behind-the-scenes story regarding the decades

In a city dreached in blue, Tracy's on the lookout for crime.

worth of scripts by different writers is largely unknown to him. "There was an [illegible] Cash and Epps [illegible] when I came aboard. [illegible] and Bo Goldman re-wrote it. What changed? I'm told quite a bit, although I never read the Cash and Epps version.

"By the time I arrived, Warren and Bo's script was already in pretty good shape through a number of rewrites since I've been on the movie. Warren *constantly* pushes to refine things; he constantly questions the logic and integrity and thought behind the script. He and Bo spent a great deal of time making refinements to character and story." As for the final screenplay credits, Osborne believes it would be "equitable" if Cash and Epps shared credit with Goldman and Beatty.

As Osborne sees it *Dick Tracy* is "a heroic tale with some pretty unusual characters." And, in order to carry it off successfully, the filmmakers had to create an entirely new world. "You can't say we're in New York City or we're in Chicago," he says. "You don't run into people who look like Prunface and Flattop in those places; they *aren't* typical characters. So, you must create a world that supports those characters.

"In this business, you're trained to re-create a selective reality. Here we didn't want realism, we wanted a coherent fantasy world that supported the story. If we're successful, people will enter this world and happily

While Big Boy Caprice (Al Pacino) talks, Mr. Korn (Woody Paulsen) tickles the ivories.

will be so absorbed . . . they'll simply accept it. We . . . didn't want someone to leap out of their seat and shout, 'Wait a second! Who's this Flattop? I've never seen anybody who looks like that!' 'A *red* street???' Your instinct may be to question such oddities, but if the story is working, you'll be drawn into the movie and you won't start questioning things. Our film depends, in a sense, on the audience having that kind of larger-than-life, unreal experience."

To illustrate his point about *Dick Tracy*'s aura of unreality, Osborne touches briefly on the matte work by Michael Lloyd and Harrison Ellenshaw. "In a conventional movie, the function of a matte painting is to capture some production value that you can't afford to capture any other way. In *Dick Tracy*, the function of a matte is to carry off this unreal, larger-than-life world that supports characters like Pruneface and Flattop. It also supports a hero who can walk through a hail of bullets and survive it. In the real world, if a person did that, he would be considered an idiot with a death wish. In *Dick Tracy*, it's a heroic, larger-than-life action that you can accept."

Dick Tracy's concept of unreality, Osborne stresses, is quite different from the unreality on view in *Batman*. "Most science-fiction stories are based on a perception of what reality in the future will be like," he notes, "and, certainly, that's what Ridley Scott did very successfully in *Blade Runner*. *Batman* was also larger than life and, like *Blade Runner*, leaned toward the dark side. *Dick Tracy*, on the other hand, is very bright, both in terms of its mood and its color scheme. There's a lot of humor in our picture, a lot of action, a lot of song and dance."

In creating the film's look, Beatty and his cohorts turned to Chester Gould's classic Sunday strips for inspiration, even though the strips had a limited color range. Observes Osborne, "If red was used in a *Dick Tracy* Sunday strip, it would be the same red throughout, or blue, or whatever color. We went for a style that's somewhat derivative of that. But more importantly, we wanted a really strong, bold look to the movie."

To that end, Beatty's support team researched the visual arts of the late '30s. "Vittorio Storaro, director of photography, did a great deal of research into that period, especially as

Can Dick Tracy save his damsel in distress, Tess Trueheart (Glenne Headly)?

All Dick Tracy Photos: Touchstone/Buena Vista/Photofest ©

terms of painting and still photography," recounts Osborne. "In particular, he researched post-Expressionist painting and found a similarity between what [certain] Expressionist painter] Otto Dix was doing and what Chester Gould was doing as far as [the] strong use of color and character design. To some extent the film's design derives from all that, as well as Warren's desire to push everybody to go beyond their limits."

While there is a framed poster in the hallway of producer Mel Gibson's Ralph Byrd as Dick Tracy, Osborne is emphatic that the old '30s-'40s *Tracy* movies in no way influenced Beatty's version. "I certainly didn't [study the other *Dick Tracy* movies], and I don't think anyone else did either. [...] [Beatty's] movie does not [...] make [us] see what attracted [...] one to this project, the idea of remaking an old *Dick Tracy* movie. Certainly, someone might have come across one of the old pictures in the course of their research, but that *wasn't* the driving force behind this film."

In translating the strip to the wide-screen format, Osborne and company encountered challenges that the producer describes as [illegible] treat the Blank, who has no face. "In the [old movies] you see the Blank," says the producer. "How do you make a Blank who's believable? Do you shoot his face or just make him look smooth like an egg? Also, the strip very successfully and very dramatically used shadows—silhouettes—with lighting behind the figures. How do you capture that in a movie? Well, we used drawn window shades with silhouettes behind them, things which created that effect.

Itchy (Ed [illegible]) can't wait to use his hand-held tommy-gun.

[illegible] (Warren Beatty) takes a criminal posture.

"How do you deal with the [illegible] come out of a character's eyes or the strip when they notice something that Gould wanted to bring to the readers' attention? Warren's solution was to use a split diopter lens so that an object would be in sharp focus in the foreground and would also hold a sharp focus in the background, like bifocals. It's a self-conscious device you wouldn't use normally in a movie, but in the context of *Dick Tracy*, it works."

Another prime consideration in any comic strip adaptation is the matter of dimension—how do you make a flat cartoon live and breathe? Osborne says it took a lot to giving the characters human concerns. "One of the ways we made Dick Tracy three-dimensional was to give him human inner conflicts and bring those into this larger-than-life story. On one hand, you've got Tracy battling the forces of the underworld in hopes of preventing the underworld from forming a monopoly. At the same time, he has inner battles to face that people can identify with—matters of love, family versus duty, the kind of things that pull on your life. When you're an important crimefighter who's dedicated to your job, how do you reconcile that with your love for Tess Trueheart and your desire to spend time with her? And, of course, Warren adds a great deal to the role. Having a star of his capabilities is a big asset to the film in general."

But are younger audiences familiar with Beatty—or, for that matter, Dick Tracy? "I would say that the younger audience is probably not aware of Dick Tracy," Osborne admits. "But they will be, by the time the movie comes out; that's what publicity is for. As far as Warren, probably some of the younger audience don't know him. But with the stars we have, I think we have a wide demographic area covered, from the young all over to the older one."

The Rodent (Neil Summers) has a nose for crime.

Clever touches like the split diopter lens came about. Osborne is convinced, because Beatty approached *Dick Tracy* as a truly collaborative endeavor. "Warren makes the final decisions, but he allows people to have creative input. That's both part of the fun of working with him and part of the agony. In the case of solving the problem of the Blank, we all went down to the prosthetics lab. John Caglione and Doug Drexler had made clay sculptures of the Blank that looked deformed and some that looked like they were from outer space. Warren would say, 'No, I don't like this one,' or 'I don't like that,' and he finally would get frustrated and start molding the clay himself. He didn't mind us putting our hands in. He encouraged us to explore, to try stuff. We were a little nervous."

"It's a director's reason to gather many personalities around him and elicit their opinions so that they challenge one another. That doesn't make anybody feel comfortable, but it does mean that every decision is investigated and questioned and hopefully distilled down to something that *really* works. It's a very creative way to work. It's a very painful way to work. Sometimes he was right, and sometimes he wasn't, depending on the difficulty of what we were trying at the time."

While it's safe to say that most of *Dick Tracy*'s $25 million price tag will be eaten up by prosthetic costs, a certain amount of that budget will be consumed by a few name and look-alike performers. Beatty and Madonna) Mandy Patinkin, Dick Van Dyke, Charles Durning, Paul Sorvino, John Schuck, Mary Woronov, Charlie (*Roger Rabbit*) Fleischer (CS #9), Kathy (*Mean Don't Leaves* Bates, Henry Silva and Beatty's *Bonnie and Clyde* co-stars Michael J. Pollard and Estelle Parsons. (Faye Dunaway and Gene Hackman reportedly were approached about doing bit parts but were otherwise engaged.) And then there are the three uncredited celebrity cameos—by James Caan, Al Pacino and Dustin Hoffman.

"Certain actors have qualifications in their contracts that they do *not* receive screen credit, so I can't really comment on them," Osborne says diplomatically. "In the case of Big Boy Caprice, the rival in our story, we cast a well-known actor [Al Pacino, billed as 'Guido Frescatti'] whose name, contractually, I *can't* reveal. At any rate, he was cast because he's a very powerful actor. I think what was appealing to him, and to many of the well-known actors we used, was the chance to have fun with their roles.

But what's the point in casting big-name actors if the audience isn't able to recognize them through their special character makeups? "Because they're *good* actors," Osborne responds. "They did it partially for the fun of doing it and partially because they're friendly with Warren. So, on the one hand, it's great to have big-name actors in the movie, and on the other hand, part of the deal was *not* to exploit their names. You don't want to sell the movie on the basis of three names because then that'd be fun and as a favor to Warren."

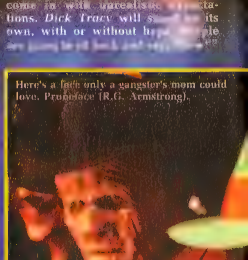
Deciding which of Dick Tracy's stable of villains to feature in the film was a task that was shared. "The writers had their favorites, of course, and some of them we chose on the basis of who looked most interesting. Milena Canonero, costume designer, went through the old comics and looked for the heavies she liked best in terms of design. We went with established villains. We drew from the comic strip, but we didn't worry about whether or not Flattop was around in 1938."

Asked why he thinks a movie about a '30s crimestopper will work today, Osborne replies, *Dick Tracy* will work because it has a human story that people can identify with. And beyond that, it's *fun*. It's an attractive picture with a great cast, a lot of action and a lot of music. We added a sense of humor that's perhaps not as [prominent] in the strip. And we wanted to make a broadly entertaining movie, we avoided gratuitous or gratuitous screen violence."

"It's a very exciting movie, and I'm sure there will be a sequel," Disney is already talking about it, but there's nothing more I can tell you about it at this point." There is, Osborne confirms, a Dick Tracy theme park attraction planned for Walt Disney World, but all he knows about it is "that they're anxious to get our costumes and some of the prosthetic masks that we made up. I believe they've approached John Caglione to make masks for the attraction. Beyond that, I really don't know that much." And a *Dick Tracy* stage show is slated to open simultaneously with the movie. That'll be at Videopolis [the park disco] in Disneyland. They've already advertised in the trades for dancers.

Since February Disney has kept up a merchandising blitz designed to saturate the public with *Dick Tracy* awareness. "I think you'll see *everything*," Osborne laughs. "There's a great deal of interest in the film, and as a result, you'll see a lot of merchandise, a wide spectrum of things. Disney controls the merchandising but *our* concern is that, as much as possible, that we maintain the movie's integrity.

So, then, would he say that *Dick Tracy* is the summer movie to beat? "It's a fun picture, and I think people will like it," Osborne offers noncommittally. "It's a visual delight, done in a style people haven't seen before." When it is suggested that he sounds as if he's hedging his bets, Barrie Osborne changes tactics, using the adjectives *Up*, *Heavyweights* and *Dick Tracy* to describe his movie. "I think you'll come in with unrealistic expectations. *Dick Tracy* will stand on its own, with or without hype. People are going to be knocked out."



Here's a fella only a gangster's mom could love. Pruneface (R.G. Armstrong).

Performing nightly at the Club Ritz are 88 Keys (Palunkin) and Breathless Mahoney (Madonna).

After 60 years, this one could be Dick Tracy's biggest. Yet despite the big-budget film and the countless merchandising tie-ins, Max Allan Collins is determined to remind people that America's greatest detective is *still* alive and well on the comics pages of the 1990s.

Collins, who took over the writing of the strip from creator Chester Gould 13 years ago (which he discussed in the original COMICS SCENE #6, 1982) says most of his recent thoughts on the newspaper *Tracy* have been colored by the film.

"The fact that the movie is set in the '30s actually presents a bit of a problem to us, because the strip is very contemporary," explains Collins. "My emphasis has always been on *current* crimes—the concept is that Dick Tracy is a timeless detective tackling timely crimes. With all of the focus on nostalgia, sometimes it's hard to get across that Tracy is not some relic—he's contemporary and of the times."

With the film's opening and the accompanying media blitz, Collins says he had to decide how to do a story that would tie in and take advantage of the publicity, and settled on a tale which would take Tracy to today's Hollywood.

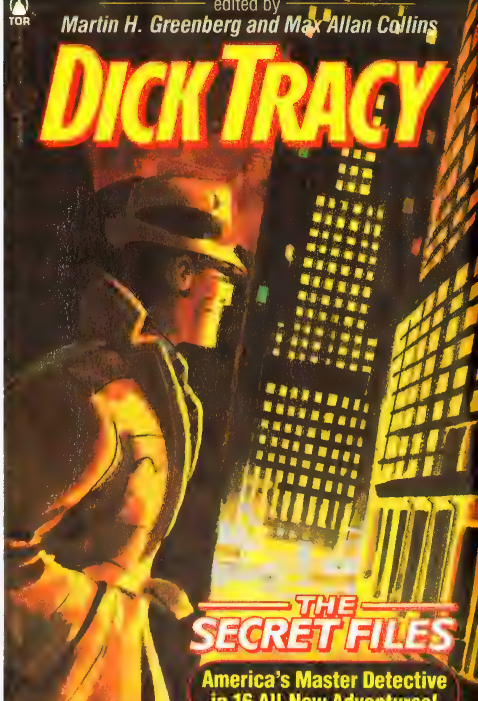
"Tracy is going to be starring in a movie about his life, so the strip will be full of classic imagery. At the same time, as usual, we'll be dealing with some very modern problems which have to do with the search for the 15 minutes of fame that so many people will pursue at any cost.

"I'm going to have a lot of tongue-in-cheek fun with Hollywood, using many characters that have appeared in show business stories in the strip's past. We're doing a strictly fictional version of the *Dick Tracy* movie. In the context of the strip's story, the actor cast to play Tracy—and this is definitely *not* Warren Beatty—has an allergic reaction to his heavy prosthetic makeup and quits. The only person they can think of who looks like Dick Tracy *is* Dick Tracy! He's a public figure, which means he's fair game for docudrama, so Tracy figures that if he comes aboard, he might have a little more creative control."

The would-be movie star has always held a fascination for Collins, who began corresponding with Gould many years before he would eventually replace Tracy's creator. "It's not a P.R. stunt—*Tracy* was my favorite comic strip when I was a kid, so this 'dream come true' thing that is sometimes harped on in P.R. pieces is legit," he asserts. He says that Dick Tracy has changed his life, mostly in positive ways, although there have been drawbacks.

"I'm so tied to *Tracy* and I so love *Tracy* that perhaps I fall prey to taking it *too* seriously, too personally—it's good to bring a certain amount of detachment to what is, after all, work-for-hire.

"But it opens many doors for me. The frustration may be that it has made it harder for me to be taken seriously as a mystery and crime novelist. Even when they like you, critics have a tendency to beat you over the head with 'Pow! Bam! Zowie!' as if I were carrying that into my work. It's an easy thing for a lazy critic do."



***The Secret Files* have been opened, and 15 other authors are joining Collins in revealing Dick Tracy's greatest mysteries.**

Despite the innovations and renovations that Collins has brought to the strip, he says his greatest accomplishment on *Dick Tracy* has been to keep the feature alive for the past 13 years. "The story strip is such an endangered species that the important thing has been literally to stay afloat!" he laughs. "That

Collins Photo: Janet Bunn/Courtesy Max Allan Collins

Partners in crimefighting: writer Max Allan Collins, artist Dick Locher, and police detectives Sam Catchem and Dick Tracy.

Art: Dick Locher

Crimestopper's Casebooks

In this biggest Dick Tracy year of all, Max Allan Collins still chronicles the detective's adventures.

By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

may not sound like the most noble aspiration, but what I wanted to do was honor the strip's tradition, while at the same time serving a modern audience.

"I think I have a good grasp on the continuing cast of characters and the strip's history. I've brought many characters back, such as Vitamin Flintheart, who Chet had abandoned in the early '50s, and I've done a lot with B.O. Plenty and Gravel Gertie. I have the strip's traditions in mind, and at the same time, I have made sure that the subject matter is right out of the headlines, so that we're not perceived as some stodgy dinosaur."

One of the ways Collins keeps *Dick Tracy* from becoming dated is his use of modern crimes; he's proud to point out that his most recent *Tracy* stories, which have involved computer viruses, dream research and environmental concerns in Antarctica, have all anticipated *Newsweek* and *Time* cover stories.

"The one time I didn't anticipate was when the Tribune Syndicate rejected a story in which I had Dick Tracy taking on the Colombian drug lords. Every time I try to do drugs as the subject matter, my editor has batted me down. Very shortly afterwards, both *Time* and *Newsweek* were full of all the Colombian drug lords stuff. So, I think I have a very good track record of tuning into what's current.

"Our idea is to try to do a crime that has never been in *Dick Tracy* before—it's pretty tricky to do. People probably assume my first goal is trying to think up the villains, but I'm really on the prowl for a crime that hasn't been in the strip before," says Collins, who cites a black market adoption story in which an entire nursery is cleaned out as an example.

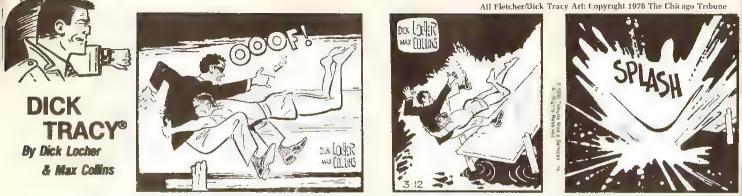
Perhaps the most important element in *Dick Tracy* is the grotesque villains, but, as Collins reminds, those distinctive bad guys weren't around in the beginning.

"The classic villains don't start to appear until Benito Mussolini and Adolph Hitler start to chase the outlaws and gangsters off the front pages. In the strip's first 10 years, Chet was mimicking true crime, but when real life got so outrageous, Chet had to up the ante—Tracy *needs* larger-than-life villains.

"Actually, the villains are the most interesting characters in *Dick Tracy*. Tracy is the tentpole—he keeps it all up; he's steady and timeless and unchanging. It's the Flattop of Gould's era, and the Putty Puss of Dick Locher's and my era that people re-

Art: Dick Locher/Tor Books

All Fletcher/Dick Tracy Art: Copyright 1978 The Chicago Tribune



ally have fun with."

Tracy is one of the very few strips that has successfully survived its creator, in a time when story strips continue to struggle in newspapers. Although continuity strips generally fare in the lower half of newspaper polls, Collins says that many papers which attempt to drop *Dick Tracy* end up reinstating it. "They're usually dumb enough to drop us in the middle of a story, and people don't like that! That's one of the reasons I blend endings into the next story's beginnings—I don't like to give them a clear place to drop us!" he laughs.

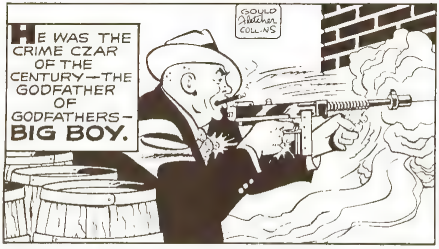
When he took over the strip, Collins says he tried to return it to the mood and tone of the early '50s—his favorite period, but he made other changes as well.

"I obviously took out the overt science fiction and Moon stuff. I also brought the family back into it, so that Dick and Tess have a son, and he's now nine or 10 years old—I introduced him to replace Junior, who I don't feel should ever have grown up," says Collins, who explains that he was eventually able to marry Junior and Sparkle Plenty to each other. "I hate to use the words 'soap opera,' but I have tried to make Tracy more human. In the last years, Tracy had become too much of a symbol, and not enough of a man. That's why I put Tracy's wife Tess back in."

Collins has worked with two artists—both former Gould assistants—since the *Tracy* creator retired; the late Rick Fletcher picked up the reins from Gould, and was followed by current artist Dick Locher. The current team has started to click well, says Collins, despite misfortunes.

"We were thrown together overnight when Rick passed away, and we also had the very tragic loss of John Locher, Dick's young son, who was our art assistant. He was just coming into his own when he died unexpectedly at age 23. We've had some blows and a rocky start, but I feel we've picked ourselves up and managed to do our best work, starting with the Putty Puss story—he is definitely the best villain I've done with Dick; some people think Angeltop is my best villain with Rick Fletcher.

"Dick Locher has a great touch for humor, so I've tried to do more humor than I did with Rick Fletcher. Rick was much better with technology and hardware, and I could do police gadgetry with him," Collins says.



The movie may have taken a number of liberties with the strip, like Big Boy's appearance, but Collins promises that all his projects will be truer to Gould's work.

Despite his enjoyment of *Tracy*, Collins says there are still topics he can't address on the comics page. "There is some subject matter I've had to do in *Ms. Tree*—that's where I go to do the stories they *don't* let me do with *Tracy*," he says, citing such topics as abortion clinic bombings, teenage runaways and a John Wayne Gacy-type villain. "If I could, I would put Tracy up against the drug lords, street gangs and serial killers. I would do tougher stuff with

Insists Collins, "Dick Tracy is a timeless detective tackling timely crimes." like assaults on the environment.

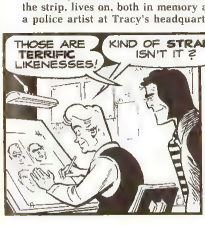
THE BRAZILIAN RAIN FOREST IS BEING DESTROYED AT A RATE THAT'S SPEEDING UP THE WARMING OF OUR PLANET—
"I STILL DON'T SEE WHAT THIS HAS TO DO WITH A REAL-ESTATE SCAM!" SAYS SAM.
SIMPLE—IF THE GREEN-HOUSE EFFECT ACCELERATES, TODAY'S SWAMPLAND IS TOMORROW'S BEACHFRONT PROPERTY—
DICK LOCHER MAX COLLINS
Art: Dick Locher

All Locher Dick Tracy Art: Copyright 1990 Tribune Media Services, Inc

more extreme violence, although my editor is probably correct not to let me do much more than I do—the tone of the times is very repressive. I have to find subversive ways to do violence!" he laughs, noting the recent dream research story, which allowed him to depict more violence because it occurred in dreams.

"People who think *Tracy* has always been wall-to-wall violence and constant deathtraps have that kind of fuzzy, nostalgic memory that's typically inaccurate. One of the first pieces of advice Chet Gould gave me was not to overdo the action and the violence. He said, 'They're exclamation points, and a good writer doesn't overuse exclamation points.' But,

The late John Locher, an art assistant on the strip, lives on, both in memory and as a police artist at Tracy's headquarters.



when he did use violence, it was memorable and shocking."

In addition to attempting to do a drug story, Collins has other ideas for future tales. "I haven't run it past the Syndicate yet, but believe it or not, I've got an idea of doing yet *another* generation of Flattop, and have him be a 17-year-old street gang member; he would be Angeltop's son. There are some strange wrinkles in the story that I would *have* to get permission to do, but it would be interesting."

There won't be any changes in the comic strip, however, to bring it in line with the Disney movie, says Collins. "I'm conscious that we'll have many eyes on us in June, and I'm trying to give the Syndicate an especially strong story so they can go out and maybe land some new papers with it. If everyone is going to turn around and say, 'That strip's still around—let's see what they're up to,' I want to make sure they get a good look!"

Collins' involvement with Tracy this year doesn't end with the newspaper strip, however, and he notes that he did some informal consulting on the film. "I gave some background material and information to Ed O'Ross, who plays Itchy. And, I was approached through the Syndicate to provide background and visual material on some villains—namely Influence [played by Henry Silva], who was added at the last moment."

Still, his major connection to the movie is penning the paperback novelization. Collins reports executive producer Barrie Osborne (see page 33) and Warren Beatty's Mulholland Productions gave him a great deal of leeway to incorporate comic strip elements in the book.

"In the movie, we don't find out about Tess Trueheart's father being killed by Big Boy's minions and this being the impetus for Tracy joining the police force, but the novel's backstory is very much the strip's backstory. I was allowed to use Vitamin Flintheart as a character in the novel, even though he is *not* in the movie. I was allowed to introduce the concept of Junior being an amateur artist, and the backstory about Diet Smith and the invention of the two-way wrist TV. This is not absolutely true to the strip—it can't be, because the movie is *based* on the strip and brings elements from various eras into our narrative. Nevertheless, I've done a lot to bring the strip and the movie closer together, and I think strip fans will have fun with the novelization. I even used the names of the top Tracy fans in the country for minor characters—Matt Masterson turns up as a reporter," he explains.

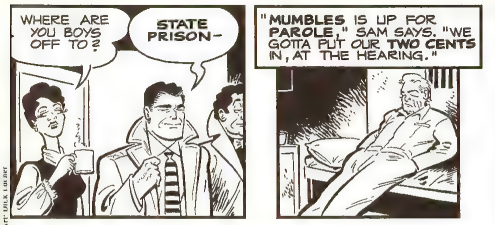
His novelization has undergone several rewrites, says Collins, due in part to "major communications breakdowns early on" involving Bantam Books, Mulholland Productions, Disney Studios and Collins' own MAC Productions. The

Those who see the movie will know who this villain *really* is, but readers of the novelization are warned that Collins "was *required* to leave out the identity of the Blank."

writer says that because he received little guidance, no visual references, and was provided with the wrong screenplay, he initially did a very loose adaptation.

"In the film, four major villains from the strip are killed in the first scene, St. Valentine's Day-style. It bothered me to kill off major villains in that way, so I kept one who I could justify in the context of the strip, in that the story about him had already happened, and I did their scene with three new villains that I made up. I did that sort of thing all the way through the first version of it, making the novel as consistent with the strip as I could and still do their story. The *actual* novelization contains about 40% of that book in reworked form. Them's the breaks!" he laughs.

Dick Tracy Photo: Peter Sorel/Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company



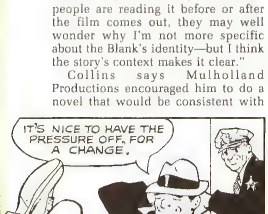
ART: DICK LOCHER

It's the rare criminal indeed who lives long enough to face Tracy more than once.

Disney requested changes in the adaptation, including several at the last minute.

"They requested that I soften the violence further, and remove the 'damns' and 'hells.' The other thing I'm most disappointed in, is that I was *required* to leave out the identity of the Blank, which is really the book's central mystery. I was instructed to 'make the ending vague.' The book will come out three or four weeks before the movie, but whether people are reading it before or after the film comes out, they may well wonder why I'm not more specific about the Blank's identity—but I think the story's context makes it clear."

Collins says Mulholland Productions encouraged him to do a novel that would be consistent with the movie and yet would also be a substantial work on its own merit. The result is a 90,000-word book. "Despite the fact that I've had to do some things to it that I wish I *wouldn't* have had to, I still think it's going to be something that Tracy fans are going to have fun with."



Art: Rick Fletcher

Hardly. With all the attention the movie's going to bring him, Tracy won't be able to sit still for a minute.

Fans will have plenty to keep them happy this summer, says Collins. There is his Bantam Books novelization of the film, which will be accompanied by an audiocassette adaptation. Collins has also edited *The Dick Tracy Casebook* for St. Martin's Press, a 300-page trade paperback containing Collins' and Locher's favorite stories from each decade of the comic strip, including the complete, uncensored story of the Brow. And Tor Books is releasing a paperback filled with Dick Tracy prose stories by 16 mystery, SF and horror writers, similar to 1989's *Further Adventures of Batman*, including an introduction and story by Collins, and a Tess Trueheart story by his wife Barb, who writes the Crimestopper's Textbook feature for the Sunday strip.

"All three of these books, in very different ways, will give people a look at a really legitimate *Dick Tracy*—there's going to be a lot of product out there, and some of it may be a little more legitimate than others," remarks Collins, voicing his displeasure with Disney's three *Dick Tracy* graphic novels (see CS #12). "I know the Gould family and many fans are *not* happy with their approach. I have not seen them—I've read one script, and seen art from the rest, and I'm not much impressed.

"Kyle Baker is certainly a talented artist, and I may revise my opinion when I see the work in full, but to me, it's a watered-down approach. I'm not sure it wasn't the creative people, but whoever made the decision to not use Tracy's image, but a realistic image of Warren Beatty, made a miscalculation of *major* proportions. Had these books been drawn in a more realistic style by someone like Jerry Ordway, then it would make sense. But, to do something as expressionistic as what Baker did, and then put little tiny realistic faces on these off-the-wall figures, is unfortunate. It was *not* Baker's decision to use the Beatty faces and the faces were reportedly redrawn by other hands]."

On the other hand, comments Collins, "I am very high on the movie—I've seen fairly extensive excerpts; this film goes to incredible lengths to re-create the look of the '40s and I'm thrilled with it, but the one thing I really disagree with is the lack of use of the classic Dick Tracy profile. It makes very little sense to me to license one of the most famous icons of Americana and *not* use it. I am mystified!"

For a brief time last year, Collins found himself writing the adventures of America's *two* greatest comic strip detectives. Artist Marshall Rogers, DC Comics and editor Mike Gold asked Collins to pen the revived *Batman* newspaper strip.

"I was thrilled, because I had an unfortunate experience writing the comic book, and always dreamed of getting a second shot at *Batman* and being able to do it with Marshall." They developed the format, starting where the movie left off but revising the ending enough so that they weren't doing the film. "The basic concept was that we would start over, and it would be the first year of Batman, and we would meet all the

(continued on page 52)

Lacking Proper Adult Super-Vision

Join the "Bratpack" and learn what really happens to superhero sidekicks.

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Once Batman took Robin under his wing, few of the 1940s' costumed crime busters saw anything wrong in letting their young wards join them on their danger-ridden exploits. Bucky and Toro dared Axis bullets as they invaded enemy nations with Captain America and the original Human Torch. Speedy and Pinky cheerfully challenged the mobs with Green Arrow and Mr. Scarlet, and hundreds of other adolescent adventurers happily donned masks and tights to seek out excitement at their more mature partners' sides.

Now, though, while there seem to be just as many teenage heroes around, hardly any operate under an adult's "guidance." After all, Bucky perished on his last war mission with Captain America, Speedy turned to drugs when Green Arrow preferred crimefighting to parenting, and Jason Todd met his end at the hands of Batman's worst enemy. And as the pages of Rick Veitch's first King Hell project, the five-issue *Bratpack*, reveal, even more dire fates can await the unsuspecting youth who still feels the need to aid a cloaked champion.

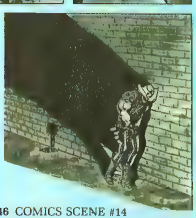
"What I'm intending to do with this series is to explore the relationship between kid sidekicks and their superhero adults in ways that have never been done before but have often *begged* to be done," says the self-publishing writer/artist. "One of the problems I've run into working in mainstream comics is that I feel that there are certain artificial limits set as to how far or how deeply you can explore characters. What I'm hoping to do with all my King Hell stuff is to

The Midnight Mink has an interest in cleaning up Slumburg, but he has an even greater one in his young pal, Chippy.

head in those forbidden directions.

"Look at Batman and Robin: half the people on the planet wonder about the sexual relationship between them. Of course, DC could *never* do a book that would really explore that, but I can. Kids are taking steroid drugs to build up their muscles and look like superheroes, and if there really were superheroes and kid sidekicks, the kids would be taking these drugs so

All Bratpack Art: By & Courtesy Rick Veitch



Judge Jury has already passed a terrible sentence on this Kid Vicious.

that they could compete. I also wanted to deal with the 'Peter Pan Syndrome' of adults who never grow up and the effect that would have on a kid in a relationship with [that kind of] adult. These are things real people face. What I'm trying to do is explore some of the negative aspects of adult/adolescent relationships that I've observed in our society, and superheroes are a good way to do it."

The masked avengers of Veitch's world stalk the streets of Slumburg, a somber, wretched city, its former majesty corroded by years of unchecked lawlessness. For the last decade, these self-appointed, self-righteous champions have struggled with the underworld, often striking as much fear into the hearts of ordinary citizens as into those of criminals, accompanied always by their ever-youthful proteges.

"When we meet the existing Bratpack, these are kids who have been doing this for three or four years, and you feel bad for them, because they're all screwed up and neurotic. And they're all *killed* at the first issue's end. In the next four issues, we follow their replacements as they're culled from civilian life and brought into superherodom, and we slowly watch these new kids become corrupted in the process so that at the end, they're almost in the same position as the original Bratpack. And the finale of it all is that they must come in conflict with the adults to find out who and what they really are and to save themselves."

Among the fiercest of Slumburg's sentinels, Veitch details, are "the Midnight Mink and Chippy, the Boy Sensation. The Mink is an aging homosexual, and he's not above using his position as a crimefighter to fulfill certain fantasies. He has had quite a few partners over the years who have worn the Chippy costume, and they've all been brought in to fill a void left by the first Chippy, who is someone the Mink just can't get over. The Chippy that we follow through the series is caught between doing his duty as a superhero and dealing with his sexual identity being dictated by an adult. With his costume and the history of the Chippies, he's always encountering derision from people wherever he goes. But there *won't* be any overt sex scenes. Since Chippy's a kid, it's not so much the actual relationship that's a problem, but the

King Rad never warned Wild Boy about drinking and flying—or about anything else, for that matter.

threat of such a relationship. There's a lot of baggage that the superhero/sidekick phenomenon carries with it, and the Midnight Mink and Chippy will address that directly."

Considering the way he darts through the city's smog-drenched skies on his jet-propelled board, it seems as though Wild Boy must always be on the verge of grazing the walls of skyscrapers, the roofs of cars, the heads of pedestrians. But if he's too reckless, he is only following the example set for him by his mentor. Outrageously irresponsible and rarely troubled by mature matters, yet armed with deadly technology better off in other hands, it's easy for the greying King Rad to convince his young comrades to follow him on his treewheeling escapades. Those who join him, however, only have so long to enjoy their costumed, carefree lives. "In reality, King Rad is leading them into life-threatening situations they're not prepared for," Veitch notes. "He's like the biggest kid around, and he often leaves his partners in the lurch.

"Now, Judge Jury and Kid Vicious are the super-patriots. Judge Jury is a racist, really hardcore vigilante." A savage disciplinarian who demands nothing short of perfection from his sidekicks, "his strategy is to completely poison the minds of his young charges with his own ridiculous version of politics and world events and use that to release their more violent instincts. What I'm going to explore with Kid Vicious is how a nice adolescent kid can have his personality changed and shaped by an adult and how a kid can become a tool of an adult to commit virtual crimes."

At presstime, Slumburg's distaff defenders were known as Moon Goddess and Luna, "but I think I'm going to change those before it sees print," Veitch confesses. "Here, I'm going to be dealing with the problem of the creation of a sex object. One of the things that people put down superheroes for is that they're so obviously sex objects. They dress in these skimpy dresses, especially the women; they all have these high-heeled boots. At one time, Moon Goddess was the typical sex bomb crimefighter, so what I also plan to play with is the neurotic competition that develops between this middle-aged woman and this nubile young girl. There's a great deal of unvoiced suspicion in their relationship.

"There is one last set of characters. There's an omnipotent superhero who's actually never seen in the book but he's talked about a lot. True Man. He has a little chum, Jack Cricket, whose problem is hero worship and the negative effects this creates in his

All Bratpack Characters & Art: Copyright 1990 Rick Veitch

Every man wanted Moon Goddess, but when she's through with her sidekick, will anyone want Luna?

life and in the lives of people around him." And although they're not as directly involved in the events of *Bratpack* as the rest, Veitch does plan to feature them more prominently in their own forthcoming mini-series. "Superman just doesn't work for me any more; I look at him and say, 'Why doesn't this happen? Why doesn't that happen?' This is the strongest person on the planet and no one seems to care. So, I've incorporated a character who *might* be equated with Superman, and I'll get to explore all that and bring it to a conclusion [in a way] that a company more involved in the licensing process than in good fiction cannot do."

While the adventures of True Man may begin even as his junior colleagues' exploits reach their end, *Bratpack* should *not* be considered the cornerstone of what the writer/artist calls "the King Hell Heroica." Unlike the tightly knit universes of both Marvel and DC (where he once tried to have *Bratpack* published, but "of course, it just bounced right out of there"), his Heroica is held together only tenuously, relying on fleeting appearances of characters from his other projects to provide its structure. In fact, the True Man mini-series will not even immediately follow *Bratpack*. Instead, another resident of Veitch's world will be featured in *The Ironic Man*, a graphic novel written by Veitch and painted by John Totleben.

"Basically, it's a story about a man's quest for his identity through the costume itself," Veitch relates. "It begins with a little kid seeing this little toy mask in a store window, and it builds from there. He tries many different ways to be a superhero, from being a simple, sort of Batman-type vigilante to being an Iron Man, where the mask at the beginning creates a full costume that's filled with all kinds of weaponry. And by the book's end, the mask and costume come alive, and he finds himself in conflict with this identity he has created."

In the mid-80s, admittedly "inspired by *Miracleman*" then still running in the British magazine *Warrior*, Veitch crafted *The One*, a tale of superbeings sent by the superpowers to fight World War III who are all but oblivious to a real apocalypse taking place around them. Since then, *Watchmen* and *The Dark Knight Returns* have appeared and others have displayed their own skewed visions of superheroics, and until his

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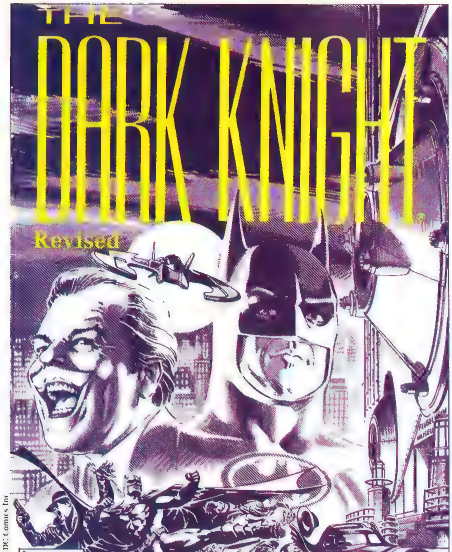


Art: Jerry Ordway & Bob Smith. Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

As a hired gun, Warren Skaaren rode into Gotham City, daring to take on "Batman."

In Hollywood, the first screenplay is never the last. A popular screenplay may go through dozens of rewrites before reaching the screen. It passes through many hands; producers, director and cast, all who want to inject their own particular concepts into the script. In cases like this, studios call in the "hired guns."

"Hired guns" are screenwriters who can incorporate all parties' ideas, retain what was exciting about the original script, add dialogue, clarity and character motivation, while shaping all of it into a solid story structure.

One such gun is Warren Skaaren (last name rhymes with "Baron," not "Warren"). Despite his brief career (his first sale was 1985's *Fire With Fire*), Skaaren has written and rewritten numerous blockbusters, including *Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop II*, *Beetlejuice* and *Batman*. Surprisingly, when Warner Bros. summoned Skaaren with the Bat-signal, he didn't want to answer it.

"Tim Burton and I had just done *Beetlejuice* together," Skaaren recalls. "Sam Hamm was writing *Batman*. He's a very good writer, and did a lot of excellent work on it [which Hamm discussed in COMICS SCENE #3] but somewhere along the way, they wanted another point-of-view, so Warners called me. I had started doing research on the race-car movie [*Days of Thunder*], and had no inclination to do *Batman*, but they called about three or four times. I finally read it, and saw some contributions I could make."

"First of all, I eliminated Robin," he reveals. "Because there's just so much time available in a movie. It's as if you put 50 people in a car, it's crowded, there's too many people—I thought everyone was suffering. Once I had gotten rid of Robin, the movie rebalanced substantially. It gave more time for us to develop something of the characters, such as the tone of Vicki and Bruce's relationship."

Part of that relationship included a controversial scene where Alfred, Bruce Wayne's loyal butler, brings Vicki Vale into the Batcave, leaving audiences shouting, "Alfred, how could you?!" The writer explains why the butler did it.

"The concept I had for that character is that Alfred is a father figure for Batman," Skaaren explains. "He tries to talk Batman into engaging in this relationship with Vicki. He says at one point, 'I'm getting too old to mourn the loss of old friends...or their sons.'

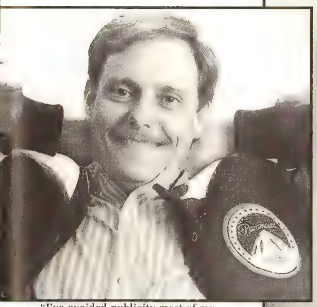
"That line indicates Alfred is getting to be an older guy, and he's afraid that Batman—that Bruce Wayne is going to be hurt, so he wants Bruce to become more healthy. Part of that would be to accept this relationship with Vicki. So, Alfred's in cahoots with Vicki, as an unspoken conspirator. He brings her into the Batcave because he wants Bruce to be with her."

Does Skaaren have any particular contribution in *Batman* that he feels really added to the film's tone? "Probably the series of scenes that have to do with the whole idea of Bruce Wayne's parents' deaths. I created that whole scene, and all the scenes that go around it, as well as the fact that he [the Joker] killed the parents.

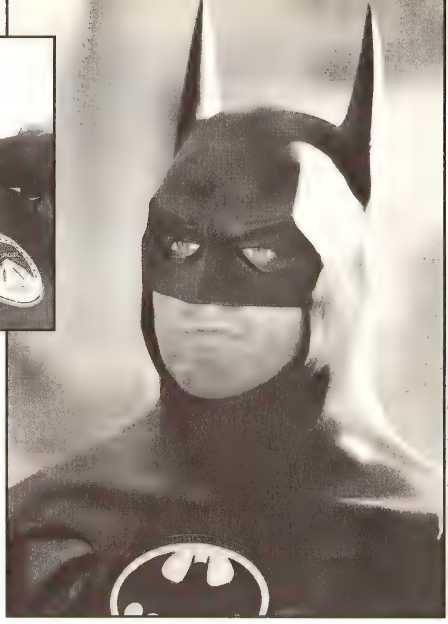
"I did that," Skaaren explains, "because, psychologically, the Joker and Batman create each other. All good hero/villain matches have some deeply personal connection, and what more permanent violence could you do to someone than kill his parents? You've made an enemy for life. I like that. At the same time, I wanted to deal with the real history in the comic books, that his parents were murdered in front of him.

"Batman has many problems because he has to operate without being caught and the fact that he falls in

Photo: Courtesy Warren Skaaren



"I've avoided publicity most of my career, but with *Batman*, it became impossible," says writer Warren Skaaren.



All Batman characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 DC Comics Inc.

love with Vicki Vale exposes him in a way that makes it harder for him to function. On top of that, he begins to sense that there's something special about this character, the Joker.

"He doesn't know what it is, but it starts to affect him because his unconscious knows before his conscious [mind] does that this guy killed his parents. Batman has a much more complicated life than the Joker, because he has many obstacles in his way, where all the Joker wants to do is blast through."

One gets the impression that Skaaren admires the Joker. "In these kinds of movies, I think the measure of the movie is frequently the strength of the villain, so I would have to say I liked the Joker the most. The evil characters are always on the go, whereas the good guys have to wait to react. The Joker takes the lead because he's the craziest and wants the most. Bruce Wayne is relatively secure in life, while the Joker has nothing to lose, so he goes after stuff.

"On top of that," Skaaren adds, "you have Jack Nicholson. With the way he played the role so high dramatically, we decided that Michael Keaton should take the quiet, more thoughtful road, because you can't have two people that big shouting and chasing each other around."

Skaaren is very pleased with Nicholson's clown prince of crime, and the role he had in developing the fiend. "I think *I* had the most effect on that character. Jack, as an actor, was the most available to me, as opposed to Michael, during shooting. Jack and I spent a fair amount of time on it. We would meet at his house, and we would get together in rehearsal. I told him some of the ideas I had. I would bounce something off him, he would come up with something and I would try it. He's a very literate guy, so we had many conversations about his character as a literary figure.

"I had the notion that we should make him like Frederich Nietzsche. You drop him in the drink and he comes out. I came up with the line where he says, 'I've been dead once. It's very liberating' [which echoes Nietzsche's quote, "That which does not kill you only makes you stronger."]."

Ironically, when considering Skaaren's zeal for making the film realistic, the characters believable, and remaining true to the Batman mythos, Skaaren *isn't* much of a comics fan.

"I read them sort of moderately. I wasn't a complete fanatic. I liked them, but I was a country kid, so I was more likely trying to look at a muskrat somewhere than read a comic. After I finished writing *Batman*, somebody sent me *The Killing Joke* [by Alan Moore & Brian Bolland]. It was brilliant, but I thought it was a little too mean for what we were doing.

"DC Comics never voiced any opinion while I was writing it, but I did get notes from [Batman creator] Bob Kane a couple times. He would read the script and send me notes, which was nice. I never met him on the set, but I did meet him at the film's premiere. I wouldn't have missed that for the world!"

Does Skaaren feel comics heroes can, with the exceptions of Superman and Batman, successfully make the transition to movies?

"It's hard to answer the question without referring to them, because what they do is solve the problem of modernizing comics and making them real people. I think we did a very good job of it with *Batman*, and *Superman* did it well, too. The problem is an audience brings a different expectation to a two-dimensional experience like a comic book.

"I wanted to deal with the real history in the comics, that Bruce Wayne's parents were murdered in front of him," says Skaaren.

"For one thing, movies have real time, with people sitting there while they're unfolding. The details have got to be much more correct than in a comic book. So, the answer is they can work as films, but you must do what we did on *Batman*, and that's make the people live. You've got to set up their world in a specific way, in a comic-book chic."

Some felt the film's climax was a little one-sided, as an armor-clad Batman pummels a somewhat defenseless Joker.

"There's an inherent problem there," Skaaren admits. "You're dealing with Batman, and supposedly all this armor, but the way I wrote it, which didn't quite get shot, is that Joker deals him a couple of tough blows in the beginning [of the bell-tower fight].

"I also added that ledge," Skaaren reveals, "so that Batman's hanging off that, trying to save himself much of the time. The way I wrote it, the helicopter comes in earlier, so the Joker has the advantage of some men up there with guns and a helicopter, but the way they actually shoot something and the way it's cut is different. The key contribution I made there is the whole gambit where it looks like Batman has fallen off the tower.

"What I did was just sit down with a chalk board. I drew the tower, and all the possibilities I could think of that would be dramatic. The best I could think of is that the audience thinks Batman has fallen with Vicki."

Skaaren's satisfaction over creating such an exciting cliffhanger is mixed with sorrow over the scene's missing pay-off.

"The best scene that's *not* in the film, that I miss the most, that hurts the most," Skaaren muses, "was after Batman comes down on a wire with Vicki. Someone calls out, 'Look—Batman's fallen over here!' People run over, and the bat-cape's down on the ground. Batman's under it, but you can't see his face. Vicki and Commissioner Gordon come over, pull the bat-cape off, we're gonna reveal who Batman is—when it turns out to be Alexander Knox! Batman has covered him up, and you see Batman escaping [sans mask and cape] through the crowd, wearing Knox's coat.

"It worked because one of the themes I inserted into the movie was that no one *ever* sees Batman with his mask off. I guess they shot it, and there was something technically wrong with the scene in the film processing. I'm sorry it's gone, because it was great and put a really nice punctuation mark at the movie's end." (This ending *can* be found in DC Comics' adaptation of the film.)

As the film's writer, Skaaren was required to be on the film's London set during rehearsal and shooting, a task he relished.

"We had a week or two of rehearsals in London, where we would sit around a big table and read things through and read it through again. I would go write at night, make changes, and start again in the morning. The set was built all around us while we were doing that. We got to the point where we could actually rehearse on the set, block things out, and I would make more changes. It was exciting."

Some would find it intimidating to do day-by-day changes on a big studio project like *Batman*, but Skaaren finds it invigorating.

"You either like this kind of work or you don't, and I just like it," he states. "I mean, it's always exciting, kinda fun, and there's a little fear in it. '*Will* you be able to do it? *How* will you do it?' After you do it for a while, you get enough confidence so that you probably come up with something worthwhile.

"I like working with people. If you look at the films I've been fortunate in choosing—I've chosen them and they've chosen me—there are some really talented people involved. That's fun, to sit down with a Jack Nicholson and make something happen."

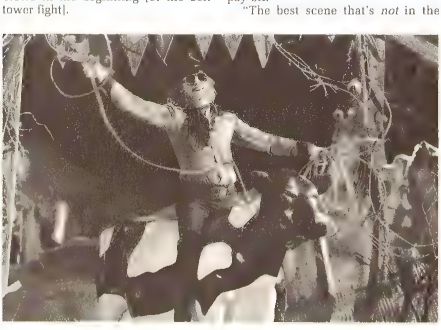


Photo Copyright 1987 The Geffen Company (courtesy Warner Bros.)

Batmania, the contagious disease that spread worldwide after the film's opening, he says, "was fun! Everywhere you would go, you

That old cowhand, Beetlejuice, will be back at the encore corral soon. Skaaren's scripting a sequel.

would look up and see a poster, you would see Prince singing your work on TV, Batman dresses, the Batman outfit..." Skaaren relates one of Batmania's benefits. "My parents could never figure out what I did for a living; they really doubted I did anything! I'm sure they thought I was a gunrunner! My mother's now 82, and had just moved into a retirement home, when she saw *Batman*.

"I hear her going around, introducing herself as 'Batman's grandmother'! She has now figured out that somehow, somewhere, I was involved in this because my name was on it. It was great, but I was just a small part of a big team of people who did it."

Skaaren has nothing but praise for the team's leader, director Tim Burton, (CS #8) with whom he worked on *Beetlejuice*. "I love working with Tim. Actually, though, our styles are very different. I'm sort of a boring middle-American guy and Tim's very hip. But when it comes to our senses of humor, and the kind of craziness that we both appreciate in a non-linear progress of stories, we're very much together."

The writer came to *Beetlejuice* fresh from more normal pursuits. "I had done *Top Gun* and *Beverly Hills Cop II*, so I said to my agent, 'Hey, Mike, find me something utterly strange that's not gonna be a big hit, because I don't want to be typecast as somebody who writes all these big damn blockbusters!' I thought we would end up with something really odd that Tim and I could do. It would make its money back, and go to videotape where only the guys wearing black t-shirts would get it. Instead, it turned out to be a huge hit!"

His tasks on *Beetlejuice* were varied. "It's hard to sum up. There were a lot of good ideas in the previous drafts [by Michael McDowell, who discussed the film's scripting in FANGORIA #74]. It was real long, very complicated and pretty tough—dark in many ways. *Beetlejuice* is the kind of stuff I think about all the time. My favorite contribution was a scene at the dinner table where they all get possessed.

"Much of what I did on *Beetlejuice* was try to focus the movie on a couple of themes. I invented a lot of stuff, too, but much of what I do tends to be structural. That is, getting the movie balanced, making sure there's a beginning, middle and end, and that people can understand it."

Skaaren expanded Beetlejuice's role from a mysterious supporting character into the film's lead. The genesis of "the ghost with the most" began, he explains, when "I just looked in the mirror! He's basically me. I think he's also many other people. Beetlejuice is the trickster, the shadow character in all of us. Everybody spends most of his life trying to be a nice guy, and Beetlejuice is what happens if you stop trying! He's

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"The measure of the movie is frequently the strength of the villain," Skaaren says. "I liked the Joker the most."

All Batman Photos: Trademark & Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc. Courtesy Warner Bros.

One of Skaaren's major script revisions involved the Boy Wonder. "I eliminated Robin," he says. Young actor Ricky Addison-Reed, seen here in *Return to Salem's Lot*, was once slated to play the role.

Robin Art: Trademark & Copyright 1979 DC Comics Inc.

Return Photo: Copyright 1987 Warner Bros. Inc. Courtesy Warner Home Video

Collins

(continued from page 44)

villains for the first time; they would *all* have new origins, and it would be completely out of continuity with the comic book."

Unfortunately, when Collins mentioned his new strip to his editors at Tribune Media Services, they invoked a clause in his contract and forced him to give it up. "Because *Dick Tracy* is my first love and first responsibility, we negotiated the right for me to finish the first story [on the *Batman* strip], but my name was not to appear on it or be part of any promotion."

Nevertheless, Collins is still working with DC, as the first issue of *Ms. Tree Quarterly* appears nearly concurrently with the *Dick Tracy* film. The first three issues of this new *Ms. Tree* (see CS #6, 1989) which deal with a major character's death, an apparent Satanic ritual murder and an anti-gay-bashing story, seem to emphasize Collins' assertion that *Ms. Tree* deals with topics he can't deal with in his newspaper strip.

"That was *always* the intent—that I could go to the alternative comics field, and do the level of violence and adult subject matter that I couldn't do in *Tracy*. That is not to paint a picture of me as incredibly frustrated with *Dick Tracy*, because I've done some pretty controversial subject matter in *Dick Tracy*. But there are things that are just too hot for a family newspaper in a repressive climate."

Collins will also have several other books out this year, in addition to his *Dick Tracy* and comic book work. Paperback reprints of the Eliot Ness novel *The Dark City*, and the Nate Heller story *The Neon Mirage*, which deals with Bugsy Siegal and the rise of Las Vegas, will be out early this summer. A new Eliot Ness novel dealing with the numbers racket, *Murder By the Numbers*, is due late this year. And the long-awaited new Nate Heller book, *The Child on Scharter Street*, will be published as a Bantam hardcover late this year or early in 1991. With an 800-page manuscript and dealing with the Lindbergh kidnapping, Collins calls it "the best thing I've *ever* done."

Despite all of his other writing, however, Max Allan Collins is still gearing up for the Year of Tracy, as he reflects on the durability of Chester Gould's square-jawed hero.

"We've stayed in the newspapers because we haven't just rested on our laurels. We've insisted on doing new subject matter and going places that the strip hasn't gone before—*without* leaving the traditions of the strip behind us. That's the key!" CS

Tracy

(continued from page 32)

named Claw (Jack Lambert), a classically Gouldian miscreant with a hook for a hand. Tracy's dilemma is neatly solved the instant the Claw gets his steel mitt tangled up in a live trolley wire. The fourth and final RKO film, *Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome*, gave screen bogeyman Boris Karloff top-billing over Byrd in a story of gangsters using a paralyzing gas to rob banks. The elements were there for a good crime adventure but once again, humorous scenes and silly character names (L.E. Thal, I.M. Learned, Dr. A. Tomic) dilute the suspense; plot devices like a body on an incinerator conveyor belt and Tracy masquerading as a bandaged hood were lifted from *Dick Tracy vs. Crime, Inc.* Among the minor plusses were wholesome heartthrob Anne (*The Black Cat*) Gwynne as Tess, and a supporting cast full of rising young faces like Robert Clarke, Sean McClory, Robert Bray and Lex Barker. (The film's original title was *Dick Tracy Meets Karloff*—until Boris balked.)

All eight Tracy adventures are now available on video from VCI—with the four serials also "condensed" into 100-minute, edited features.

Meets Gruesome was the final low-budget Tracy feature, but the indefatigable character—and Ralph Byrd—sprang back simultaneously in 1950 when the series *Dick Tracy* premiered in September on ABC TV. Tracy (Byrd) was joined by comic strip sidekick Sam Catchem (Joe Devlin) in this short-lived series, battling characters like the Mole and the Joker (not Batman's). Low budgets and poor production values hurt the series' chances and the show was dropped from ABC's line-up. Byrd continued to make new episodes with the hope that the series would sell in syndication, but on August 18, 1952, the 43-year-old actor died of a heart attack in Tarzana, California. He was survived by his actress-wife Virginia Carroll, who had played small parts in many films and serials.

Throughout his years on the silver screen, Tracy was also catching crooks on the radio airwaves. Sponsored by Quaker Puffed Wheat and Tootsie Roll Candy, Tracy solved cases in a daily 15-minute radio serial broadcast first on the Mutual Network (1935-37), later on NBC (1937-39) and finally on NBC Blue/later retitled ABC (1943-48). In 1946, his daily caseload was revised into a weekly half-hour series. The popular radio show employed, as regulars, such strip characters as Junior, Chief Brandon, Tess Trueheart and Pat Patton with B.O. Plenty, Vitamin Flintheart and Flattop making later appearances. Tracy himself was voiced by Ned Weaver, Matt Crowley and Barry Thompson.

Tracy was dormant outside of the print medium until 1961, when an animated Tracy series debuted. The accent was on humor in these UPA cartoon adventures, with Tracy using his two-way wrist radio to turn assignments over to subordinates like Joe Jitsu and Heap O'Callory. Villains included such well-remembered characters as Flattop, the Brow and BB Eyes, and Gould, who was technical advisor for the series, seemed happy with the light approach ("I've been consulted on every phase and I'm in complete agreement with what's being done," he told an interviewer). Gould went on to make a comment—"A serious approach for kids is ridiculous"—which perhaps tells us something about his opinion of the Tracy serials and features, which *were* made primarily for youngsters, and which took that approach exactly. Former Mercury Player Everett (*Citizen Kane*) Sloane had to have been down to his last buck to take on the role of Tracy; other voices were provided by vocal artists like Benny Rubin, Paul Frees and Mel Blanc. The cartoon *Tracy* was a big success, and even met UPA's Mr. Magoo in a one-shot spin-off, a segment used in the 1967 film *Mr. Magoo—Man of Mystery*. Paramount Home Video is releasing the *Tracy* cartoons on video.

In 1966, William Dozier's Greenway Productions (producers of TV's *Batman* and *The Green Hornet*) jumped on the Tracy bandwagon, turning out a half-hour *Dick Tracy* pilot starring Ray MacDonnell as Tracy and Victor Buono as nemesis Mr. Memory. The pilot (shot at 20th Century Fox) never sold, but this ultra-rare page from TV history occasionally plays at SF & comics conventions. Tracy also made brief animated appearances in the Saturday morning series *Archie's TV Funnies* in the '70s. Talk of a major big-screen Tracy adventure has been in the air in Hollywood since 1974, with many different stars (notably Dan Aykroyd and Clint Eastwood) under consideration for the role of the lantern-jawed lawman.

Perhaps after this summer, Dick Tracy *will* forever wear the face of Warren Beatty in the minds of today's moviegoers, but the warm-fuzzy heartthrob will have to go a long way to erase the Saturday matinee Tracy and the chiseled profile of Ralph Byrd from the memories of oldtime fans. CS

EVERY SUPERHERO'S ALL-AMERICAN

With the help of a star-spangled avenger, filmmaker Albert Pyun fulfills his American dream.

By MARC SHAPIRO

In recent years, Albert Pyun has willingly subjected himself to being an in-house director for Cannon and now 21st Century Films. There was a method to his madness, but as such clinkers as *Alien from LA*, *Cyborg* and a Mr. Fix-It job on *Journey to the Center of the Earth* continued to come his way, the Hawaiian-born Pyun, began to think only in terms of madness.

"I had been promised something better," recalls Pyun, "but while I was waiting for that something better, Cannon kept coming up with these jobs they needed done for a price and a schedule, so I did them. But you can only be offered things like *Alien from LA* for so long before you start getting disillusioned. I was beginning to think I was *never* going to get a shot at a class project with a real budget and real stars. But finally, Menahem [Golan, former Cannon head, now with 21st Century] made good on his promise and repaid me with this."

The director's payback is *Captain America* (now scheduled for an August release, but possibly only bowing on video). And despite the publicity surrounding Cap's comics-to-film colleague, *Batman*, Pyun is grateful that his little (by comparison) adaptation of the super-patriot created by Joe Simon & Jack Kirby (see page 56) has gone almost completely unnoticed.

"I like the idea that we've gotten around the hype. Most people were not aware that this film was being made, which hasn't given rise to speculation about things like whether Matt Salinger can *really* play Captain America."

Captain America Characters: Trademark & Copyright 1990 Marvel Entertainment Group

Pyun's reaction to the *Captain America* script was made known in COMICS SCENE #12. What wasn't was the director's long-standing familiarity and admiration for the hero created in 1940.

"I read the comic book when I was growing up," says Pyun. "I always liked the idea of his being from the '40s and having to assimilate into modern society. I also liked the Rip Van Winkle aspect of being frozen in the Arctic and the fact that you always saw things through his eyes.

"Because of what I knew about the character, I knew we wouldn't be trapped in a movie called *Captain America*. We would know what to do with it."

Pyun calls *Captain America* "an incredibly faithful translation of the comic book" and says that its story "transcends the genre. And it was because the script played that way that I was really worried about this film. I lay awake nights worrying about whether the humanity of the characters would come across and whether the performances would be deeply moving. I knew that, for this movie to be successful, people would have to cry.

"I felt that because the script had such a strong point-of-view and was so deeply affecting in the way it presented its ideas, that my biggest challenge as a director would be to satisfy everybody's expectations. Some people have an idea of what a comics superhero movie should be about so those elements had to be there. But I also felt I had to move the audience's perceptions away from the one-dimensional and the stereotypical and get them totally involved in the story."

Given the nature of the script, that wasn't going to be too difficult.

"*Captain America* is the type of movie where the villain is incredibly evil but *not* secondary to what the hero does. The movie opens on the villain as a child and ends with our focusing on him. That, in itself," remarks the director, "is different.

"So is the fact that we deal with a hero who is heroic because he saves lives rather than taking them. Captain America is not a hero because he bashes heads and stops earthquakes. Captain America is somebody who finds the strength to save a small piece of the world instead of all of it. And he starts by saving his own soul."

Pyun claims that his good fortune concerning the project continued in the casting process.

"I got lucky in that I got to work with just about everybody I ever wanted to work with. Matt Salinger is somebody I've known for a long time and I had to work extra hard to convince him that he wouldn't get typecast by playing Captain America. Scott Paulin was the first person I thought of to play the Red Skull. I sent him the script and he picked up on that immediately. The only person I wasn't familiar with was Kim Gillingham, and the minute she walked through the door, I knew she was the right person."

Principal photography began on *Captain America* in June 1989 and, long hours and difficult terrain aside, the filmmaker found the biggest challenge and most memorable moments to be in the area of special FX.

"It was definitely a big FX film," Pyun acknowledges. "The rocket launch scene inside the V-1 rocket plant was very scary. We had no idea if the stunt would work at all. After all, the rocket [through a combination of cranes, hydraulics and guide wires] had to travel 100 feet through the air and there were some real dangers involved for the stuntmen.

"The shield sequences were pretty interesting in that we were actually able to get it to work like it does in the comic books. Most of the sequences were done with the shield attached to wires, but because Matt turned out to be an excellent frisbee thrower, we were able to film some of the scenes without much overlapping. We have one scene where Matt was actually able to throw the shield and knock over a motorcycle."

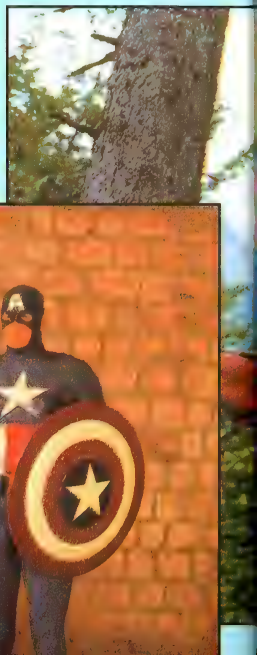
Albert Pyun became intrigued by filmmaking early on. At age 8, he was making short 8mm features in and around his Hawaiian neighborhood. By his teen years, he was working regularly as a cameraman on local commercials, documentaries and industrial films.

Following graduation from high school, Pyun went to Japan where he worked in TV and on feature films while learning the ropes at the feet of legendary director Akira Kurosawa.

"I returned to Hawaii," recalls Pyun, "but I soon realized that if I wanted to get my feature film career going, I would have to move to the mainland."

Pyun came to Los Angeles in 1976 and struggled for four years before landing his first film assignment, directing *The Sword and the Sorcerer*.

He went on to direct *The Treasure of San Lucas*, *Lunar Madness*,



Radioactive Dreams, *Dangerously Close*, *Down Twisted* and *Deceit*. But it was on such quick-and-dirty efforts as *Alien from LA*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth* and *Cyborg* that Pyun would earn his early, dubious reputation.

"I had no illusions about *Alien from LA*. It was going direct to video and had to be delivered at a certain price and on a specific schedule. I was called in on *Journey to the Center of the Earth* after principal photography had already been completed. I was told the film needed a beginning and an ending and that I had five days to film both."

Pyun remembers that *Cyborg* was like doing a comic book movie.

"It was an interesting situation. *Cyborg* originally started out as being *Masters of the Universe II* and was going to be a very American film in

(continued on page 66)

The movie gives equal focus to its vi— the evil Red Skull (Scott Paulin).

Director Albert Pyun had to persuade actor Matt Salinger that portraying Captain America wouldn't lead to superheroic typecasting.

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PROJECT CAPTAIN AMERICA

DECLASSIFIED

By WILL MURRAY

At last, it can be told! Joe Simon & Jack Kirby discuss how they created this country's first super-soldier.

Fifty summers ago, Captain America was born under the able hands of Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. The two men—penciller Kirby and triple-threat writer, editor and artist Joe Simon—had just jumped over to Martin Goodman's Timely Comics after a stint at Fox, where they co-created Blue Bolt.

Publisher Martin Goodman wanted a new hero to join the established Timely stars, the fire-and-water combination of the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner, and so he turned to his new editor, Joe Simon.

Goodman and Simon brainstormed several ideas. It's one of the untold stories behind the famous character's creation that the hero was actually an afterthought.

"We had the villain first," Joe Simon recalls, "and then we came up with Captain America. *Everybody* was looking for interesting villains. You know, Bob Kane and Bill Finger and the others were coming out with some very interesting ones and they were selling. I thought of what kind of a villain to come up with, and there was only one that the *whole world* hated and that was Adolph Hitler. So, he was our villain!"

With war clouds on the horizon, the choice of Adolph Hitler for the villain could only mean a hero who embodied the American spirit. It was not entirely a new concept, Simon admits.

"Everyone was trying to come up with big heroes, big hits, at that time," he says. "Archie Comics had the Shield, which was very weak. We felt they didn't know how to do superheroes—and they still don't! The whole reason we put Captain America out was that America was in a patriotic frenzy."

Most comics histories credit both Simon and Kirby as equal co-creators, with Kirby designing the familiar red, white and blue costume, but that's not how Simon recalls it.

"Kirby didn't design it," Simon reports. "I did that with Martin Goodman. He and I were talking about Captain America. We were passing sketches before Kirby was even in on it."

Simon came up with the name, Captain America, and sketched out a preliminary costume. The new hero would be a swashbuckler who wore a blue mask-helmet emblazoned with the letter "A," wings inspired by Mercury sprouting from his temples. And he would carry a striped shield.

Then, Simon took it to his premier penciller, Jack Kirby, who was delighted with the concept, adding refinements of his own.

"Superman was already in progress," Jack Kirby remembers. "The world—or at least America—was becoming aware that super-characters were a new vogue. Joe and I looked at it the same way, and we came up with super-characters of our own. Captain America happened to be it. It was a revolutionary concept.

That was why we tackled it. We felt that that was what the day demanded."

It was perhaps the strangest genesis a comic book hero would ever have, but it would ultimately result in one of the most enduring characters in comics—and one Simon and Kirby would often return to, even if they had to sometimes reinvent him.

Some have speculated that the Shield had an influence on Captain America's creation, a suggestion both men flatly dismiss.

"*None* at all," Simon states. "The Shield was out before Captain America, but it was an ugly costume and pretty dead action. I never read the old Shield, frankly, and never liked the artwork on it. It had no bearing whatsoever. I don't think we even gave it any consideration."

"We weren't in the business of selling antiques," Kirby observes. "We weren't going to draw *Maggie & Jiggs*! We were going to draw what was selling, and what sold was anything that resembled Superman. Captain America was different. He was dynamic. Bucky was a great addition. he represented the younger people. And we had what we wanted."

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It didn't matter to Simon that the United States wasn't at war yet; Cap was still going to go after "the only one the *whole* world hated— that was Adolph Hitler."

The first issue of *Captain America Comics* hit the nation's newsstands on December 20, 1940—a year before Pearl Harbor. It boasted several firsts, not the least of which was that Captain America was the first superhero character in comics to earn his own title *without* having first appeared in another comic book.

Perhaps most arresting to 1940 readers was the cover. It depicted Captain America punching out no less than Adolph Hitler himself! Using a real-life dictator as the villain was unheard of in comics, but it was part of the pseudo-realism that was to become a Simon and Kirby trademark.

Captain America Comics #1 sold out. It was quickly selling six figures.

Classic Captain America Art, Jack Kirby & Joe Simon

Joe Simon had succeeded in "developing" a villain as popular as any Batman foe.

"I think *Captain America* was selling better than *Batman* at that time," he says. "They were on a par. They were both in the millions."

Looking back on the now-famous first issue—wherein puny draft-reject Steve Rogers ingests the body-building super-soldier formula and becomes Captain America—Simon casts a critical eye over his own creation.

"I didn't think personally that the origin story was that unique," he says now. "I just wanted to get it over with, and get him into his Captain America outfit. But I liked the military background because we were going into a war at the time."

The cast was rounded out by Sgt. Duffy, Betty Ross and Captain America's sidekick, Bucky Barnes, who was named by Simon after a school chum. "In my high school basketball team," he recalls, "we had a guy named Buck Pierson. We called him Bucky."

When the second issue came out, Cap was still harrying Hitler, but two costume elements were changed without explanation. His mask now attached to his costume instead of leaving the neck exposed, and his tri-

Thanks to a competitor, Captain America got a new shield in his second issue, the better to invade Germany with.

angular shield inexplicably rounded itself off into a striped frisbee.

"It was more heroic than having a piece of skin exposed," Simon says of the helmet change. "And when you had small figures, you had to worry about color."

But the story behind the new shield is another untold tale of Captain America.

"That was John Goldwater's idea," Simon says, chuckling at the memory. "Goldwater threatened us with a lawsuit because he said it was a copy of the Shield. We changed the shield's shape and it turned out we liked it even *better* because we could throw it around."

Goldwater was publisher of the MLJ group, whose Shield character wore as part of his costume a bulky triangular shield that protected his torso from clavicle to crotch.

And so, art corrections were hastily made on the second issue. Kirby agrees the change proved to be for the best.

"As a triangle, the uses would congeal," Kirby explains. "The round shield was like a discus. There are a number of things you could do with a discus that you *can't* do with a triangular-shaped object. You could roll it, you could throw it. We could use it in a variety of ways."

"It was no big deal to change it," Simon adds.

Since Captain America often used his shield to deflect bullets, his unique chain-mail tunic was seldom called upon to serve its original intended function.

"We were just trying to be different," Simon says of the chain-mail. "It was a defensive agent, like a bullet-proof vest kind of thing. Many times, we forgot to use it."

Pressed to recall their favorite Captain America stories, the pair give nearly identical responses, both centering around the character who quickly replaced Hitler as Cap's most vicious foe.

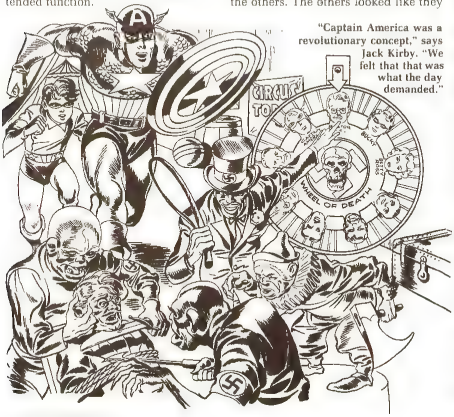
"Oh, gosh, I haven't thought about it all these many years," Kirby admits. "The Red Skull was something I'll always remember. The Red Skull was just a different way of making a Nazi. He was an anti-hero, and as important as the hero himself."

"He was just a weird looking thing," Simon chimes in. "There was no deep concept behind it."

After an exhilarating 10-issue run, backed up by writers Ed Herron and inkers like Al Avison, Charles Nicholas and others, Simon and Kirby moved on to DC Comics to collaborate on the Boy Commandos.

Captain America continued on, but without the distinctive Simon and Kirby touch, it lacked the fire that made it a comic book bestseller. Simon credits Kirby's vibrant pencils with making *Captain America* the success it became.

"The first time I saw his work, I admired it tremendously," Simon says of Kirby. "I thought Captain America was so superior to the other things. Our comics had more life than the others. The others looked like they were on paper. Ours looked like they were real people."



"Captain America was a revolutionary concept," says Jack Kirby. "We felt that that was what the day demanded."

Simon and Kirby continued their successful partnership into the 1950s, collaborating on a string of popular titles like *Young Romance*, *Black Magic*, *Captain 3-D*, *Boy's Ranch* and others, some of which they published themselves.

Then in 1953, Timely revived Captain America after a four-year hiatus as a crusader against Communism.

"We were bitter about not owning Captain America," Simon says frankly. "We thought we would show them how to do Captain America again. Instead, we did Fighting American. We thought they [Timely] were going to take action against us, but they didn't."

Fighting American (see CS #11) was nothing less than Captain America retooled for the Red Scare period. But after the first issue, Senator Joe McCarthy was discredited, leaving Fighting American in a sinking boat of demagogues.

"The first issue was like the first issue of *Captain America*, very patriotic," Simon recalls. "Then we found out we were being very stupid, or very naive. We changed it to a lot of jokes. It turned out to be one of the book's strengths. We had a lot of fun with it."

Garbed in an updated Captain America-style outfit, the newly sensitized Fighting American fought tongue-in-cheek villains like Poison Ivan and Rhode Island Red and became a cult classic in his own right (and has been collected in hardcover graphic novel format).

"Fighting American is a satire on our own condition," Kirby points out. "He's almost slapstick. Fighting American is kind of a burlesque on the patriotic thing."

Like Steve Rogers before him, skinny Nelson Flagg was selected to become a government-engineered US agent. His mind transferred into the rebuilt body of his murdered brother, Flagg literally became his brother, Johnny. It was a novel concept, but one never explored beyond the origin.

"I was so concerned with doing the villain and hero thing that I kinda left that behind," Kirby says wistfully.

Neither Fighting American nor Captain America survived beyond 1955, thanks to an industry-wide implosion triggered by Senate hearings into violence in comic books.

They were already fading memories when, in 1959, Simon and Kirby reunited to create still another star-spangled hero.

Ironically, it was John Goldwater, now calling his company Radio Comics, who brought them together to

revive his long-defunct Shield character. This Shield was not the original G-man named Joe Higgins, however. The new Shield was Lancelot Strong, the product of a childhood experiment to develop latent human potential. Possessing strange lightning-throwing powers, as well as flight, invulnerability and super-speed—which neither of his predecessors enjoyed—he was a clone of Steve Rogers, serving in the peacetime Army and getting into trouble with Sgt. Hardrock—who bore an uncanny resemblance to Steve Rogers' old nemesis, Sgt. Duffy. All he lacked was a boy sidekick and a shield.

Simon disliked retreading what he felt was a poor character.

"That was one of the weakest things in our repertoire," he remarks with a chuckle. "But John Goldwater wanted us to do it. He said, 'Give me a cross between the Shield and Captain America.' He wanted another Captain America and that's what he got. It wasn't one of our favorites."

But Kirby was happy to work on the feature.

"It was the kind of character that I did best," Kirby recalls, "and I didn't like to deviate from that. I knew it would sell, and it did. I knew I would do it well, and it came out just fine."

However, *The Double Life of Private Strong* was cancelled after only two issues—not because of poor sales but ironically because DC Comics threatened a lawsuit, claiming that the super-powered Shield was too similar to Superman!

Simon and Kirby parted company once more. Although they would collaborate again, this would prove to be their patriotic hero swan song.

Kirby returned to working for Timely, now called Marvel Comics, with a new writing partner, editor Stan Lee, who had broken into print with a Captain America text story back in 1941. Together, they launched a new wave of characters beginning with the Fantastic Four in 1961. A revival of the Sub-Mariner led Lee to believe other old Timely characters could be resurrected.

After a test story in which the new Human Torch battled a Captain America impostor, the star-spangled hero was brought back for real in the pages of *The Avengers* in 1964.

Despite post-war stories to the contrary, Lee and Kirby revealed that Captain America had disappeared at World War II's end, during a failed attempt to save partner Bucky Barnes, who had been tied to a runaway rocket. The rocket exploded, extinguishing the brave lad's life.

Captain America plummeted into the ocean, freezing solid until the Sub-Mariner discovered him frozen in a block of ice, setting in motion the events leading to his revival from suspended animation. Contrary to the soon-to-be-released movie, Cap was revived by the Avengers and soon avenged Bucky's murder at the hands of—not perennial foe the Red Skull—but Baron Zemo.

The death of Bucky Barnes was traumatic, but, Kirby felt, necessary.

"It was a terrible thing to do," he says now. "And yet, it illustrates that some kind of circumstance like that could come about. Bucky died in a very emotional kind of way, and I personally felt the emotion myself. I was hoping the reader might, because I wanted to do it as a gesture of reality. That was to give the strip itself a kind of cloak of reality.

"In fact," Kirby goes on, "killing off Bucky was kind of an editorial comment on the terrifying aspect of the missile program, because that could be *your* boy. It's not easy to see a thing like that happen."

Shorn of his fighting partner, the new Cap became a tragic figure, part superhero and part Hamlet. Although the same Steve Rogers of the 1940s, he had been reinvented for the 1960s.

Asked if he was in agreement with Stan Lee's tragic slant on the Captain America revival, Kirby at first shies away from a direct answer.

"Well, I don't know how much of Stan Lee's influence was there," he allows. "That's a question you'll have to ask Stan. I can't answer for him.

"I can't comment on that kind of writing style," Kirby adds. "I can only say I did the best I could with the illustrations and they always reflected my drawing techniques and my own feelings. As for the Stan Lee dialogue, you'll have to interview him about that. I had nothing to do with the blurbs. What I did was write the plot. I wrote the complete plot in on the side and Lee would put in his own dialogue. You were reading Stan."

Captain America went on to become leader of the Avengers, and to star in his own feature in *Tales of Suspense*, written by Lee and drawn by Kirby. By 1968, he was again starring in his own title.

Kirby eventually moved on, leaving both *Captain America* and *The Avengers* in other hands. He also left Marvel, but when he returned in 1975, the only old-time Marvel character he resumed working on was Captain America. This time, he both drew and wrote the feature.

The new Captain America returned to his roots as a swashbuckling man of combat—*without* the introspection of the '60s—in stories like "The Man Who Sold the United States," part of an extended Bicentennial epic that culminated in *Captain America* #200. In many ways, they harkened back to the old Simon and Kirby days.

Asked if he sees his solo Captain America stories as closer to the original Simon and Kirby spirit than the Lee-Kirby version, the artist's answer is unequivocal.

(continued on page 66)

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The entire Simon & Kirby Captain America saga has been collected into a $75 two-volume set (with slipcase), available this month from Marvel.

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Veitch

(continued from page 47)

falling out with DC over the original contents of *Swamp Thing* #88, Veitch frequently used that title to show sides of familiar characters usually kept hidden. Still, as enthusiastic as he is now about his own and others' work in this area, there was a time when garishly garbed adventurers couldn't hold the slightest fascination for him.

"For years, I had been pondering on superheroes and whether they were worth doing or not. And a couple of weird things happened to me," he recalls. "In 1980, I went to Italy, and at that point, I was *completely* down on superheroes. I thought it had all been done, and I didn't want to have anything to do with it. But at this comic convention in Italy, I met Moebius very briefly.

"We were having a little chat about comics in America and I gave him my spiel: 'Oh, there are too many superheroes, they've all been done to death, it's ruining comics.' And he just looked at me very intensely and said, 'No. They're beautiful.' I tried to repeat my thing, and he looked at me again and said, 'No. They're *very* beautiful.' And the experience haunted me for a while, because I respected Moebius' work a great deal and he was the last person I ever would have thought would like superheroes. But the more I thought about it, the more I began to understand that he was able to look at them like a child. Those of us who have grown up on them, we've read so many superhero comics we're just like the guy who has eaten too many McDonald's hamburgers—we *never* want to see another one. But that and reading what Alan Moore did with *Miracleman*... Alan was the first one who was able to break through all that cynicism that most of us carried within us about these stupid costumed heroes and to treat them with the respect and dignity of any other fictional character. Both of those experiences inspired me greatly to go on, and I'm really happy that there is the revisionist superhero movement now. I hope there's more of it. I think the future of comics is in treating these heroes and their relationships and problems as if they were real.

"You know, if you look at popular culture today, superheroes aren't just a comic-book phenomenon; they're everywhere. People *want* to explore the ideas of superhumans. People are really interested in it. Sure, on the one hand, it's a stupid little children's fantasy, but on the other hand," says Veitch, "it's much more than that."

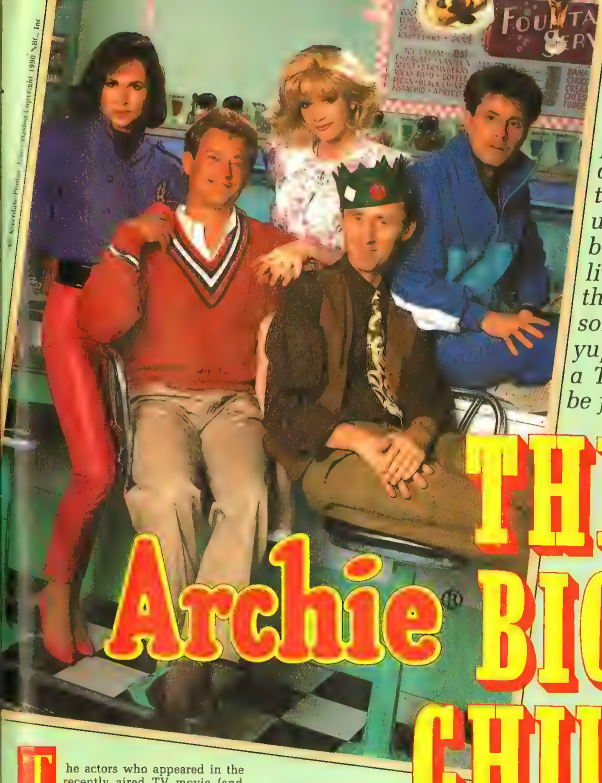
West

(continued from page 22)

book on the history of photography which has a section on photographs from the 1870s, and for any real-life characters that I'm *not* able to research, I'll still try to keep them in character within the time period by using that book, looking at costumes and hair styles. That way, nothing will feel out of place."

Ellis seems full of ambition and enthusiasm for Millennium Publishing and, even though the deal hasn't yet been cemented, he's confident enough to announce that the company's next project will be a comic book version of Anne Rice's popular novel *The Mummy*, to be adapted by Faye Perozich of *The Vampire Lestat* fame. Letting off a bit of steam, Ellis explains that he has helped found Millennium largely because "I was so tired of dealing with 30-year-old 15-year-olds. This is one of the reasons why, in the past, I never really went hard ahead, trying to get any further into the comics field than I am. It was partly because I have an active career in other areas of writing and such, and partly because I don't have the patience. If I was 18, 19 years old, I would let these people who have serious ego problems push me around and tell me to do this and that, because I would be wanting to get into it so bad; but at *my* age, my first reaction is to punch somebody in the face! So when we conceived Millennium, Paul, Melissa and I just said, 'If we're gonna do it, let's do something really novel. Run it like professionals and treat the people who work for us like human beings.' "

So, what does the future hold for fans who enjoy Millennium's initial foray into *The Wild Wild West*? Will any future incarnations of the classic show feature the *outre* SF elements that a large contingent of *Wild West* fans will demand? "We've discussed it, and if we do decide to go beyond the four-issue mini-series, one of the things we might like to do is bring Count Manzeppi back," Mark Ellis explains, referring to the mystical villain played by Victor Buono in two *Wild West* episodes. "I don't think we're going to want to get into much fantasy, but that's the beautiful thing about the *Wild Wild West* format: Just about *any* type of story can be told and it doesn't seem out of place. I'm not too keen on doing a totally unlimited series, 'cause we'll get formulized just like the TV show. But we'll do more—there's obviously other stories of *The Wild Wild West* we would like to tell."



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America's perennial comic-book teens grow up to become live-action, thirty-something yuppies. Can a TV series be far behind?

Archie THE BIG CHILL

By MARC SHAPIRO

The actors who appeared in the recently aired TV movie (and backdoor series pilot) *Archie: To Riverdale and Back Again* have several things in common. They look amazingly like the comic book characters they were hired to play. And they had various degrees of familiarity with the four-color creations they were helping to bring to the small screen.

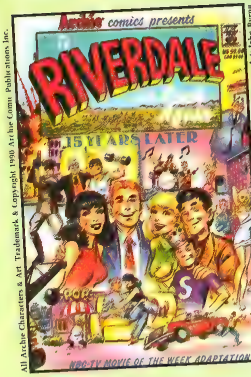
"I *never* read the comics," admits actress Karen Kopins who plays Veronica Lodge. "Not once."

"Well, I read them once in a while, but I wasn't a junkie about them," recalls Gary (*Saturday Night Live*) Kroeger, the comic who inherits the mantle of Reggie Mantle.

"I came from an illiterate family," chuckles Sam (Jughead) Whipple. "I only looked at the pictures."

No matter, for you didn't need to be a scholar of Archie lore to get the drift of where *To Riverdale and Back* was going. Because this version (which aired mid-May, heralding the approaching 50th anniversary of the comic's inception) put those classic and very white-bread residents of Riverdale in some very '90s and, as actor Christopher (Archie himself) Rich describes them, "definitely PG-13 situations."

The film, directed by Dick Lowry from an Evan Katz script, focused on a 15-year high school reunion in which Archie, Veronica and pals are all in their 30s and facing a multitude



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There are some "definitely PG-13 situations" when Archie and gang go *The Big Chill* route on TV—even in the comics adaptation.

of personal and professional problems and decisions in a very relevant, *Big Chill* manner.

Also in the cast are Lauren Holly as Betty, Jeff Hochendoner as Moose, David Doyle as Mr. Weatherbee and Fran Ryan as Miss Grundy.

Evan Katz was somebody else whose knowledge of Archie comics was rather limited. "I read the comics once. I think it was in Donny's Barber Shop," the writer chuckles.

But it was logistics, rather than knowledge of Archie that gave Katz uneasy moments when he was offered the writing assignment on *To Riverdale and Back*.

"For me, it wasn't obvious what I should do with the material and how to sustain a story for two hours," he remembers. "Finally, I realized that the answer to my problem was the reason why people read the comics in the first place, which is the love triangle between Archie, Veronica and Betty. Throwing in an extraneous story about Archie and the gang teaming up to save the town from a nuclear reactor wouldn't have cut it. Focusing on that triangle and the other characters' personal problems made perfect sense because that's what worked in the comics."

Katz also points to the importance of creating believable translations of the comic book characters.

"Veronica was the easiest to create because she's still, even as an adult, a professional shopper. Archie was the most difficult. In the comics, Archie was always the butt of many jokes and appeared to be aimless. While that works in the comics, that wouldn't have worked for a leading man in a movie. Reggie was the only character who seemed to know what he wanted, so making him an entrepreneur seemed obvious. So did making Jughead a shrink. When it came to Archie, the idea of having him be the lawyer who never left town seemed a natural. It was that way with the rest of the characters. It all seemed to make natural sense."

So did having these adult characters deal with grown-up situations.

"It was never intended that this version of Archie be unsafe or sleazy, but these people are in their 30s, so their sexuality had to be dealt with. If these characters had stayed perpetually 16, the overriding issue could have been fudge. But we let Archie and the others grow up and so sex had to be addressed."

Karen Kopins saw something in the character of Veronica that doesn't normally surface.

"She's not the sweet and boring character that most people think she is," says Kopins. "She's gutsy, sensuous and spoiled and that makes her a real challenge to bring to life."

Kopins, whose credits include the films *Jake Speed* and *Once Bitten*, claims that challenge began the moment she put on the trademark duds.

"Because Veronica's clothes are such an important part of her character, I tended to *become* her the moment I put on her clothes," says the actress. "She's classy, wealthy and a little bit wild, which is why I had to take care not to play her real big. You've got to play Veronica with a little bit of control."

Kopins is aware that this *Archie* may well go to series. She's looking forward to that eventuality.

"I would like nothing better than to be the household name that doing a weekly series would do for me. If this show goes to series and has a long run, it will give me some clout."

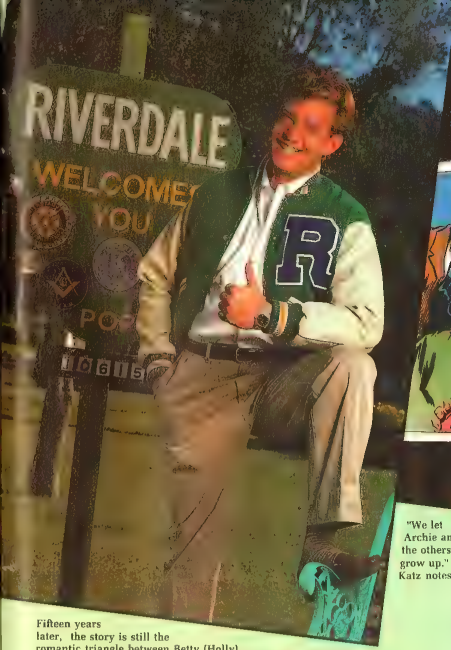
Gary Kroeger, who currently hosts the Fox TV series *Comic Strip Live*, wasn't really interested in playing Reggie. His familiarity with Archie comics was the reason why.

"But many people said, 'Just read the script, Gary,' and when I did, I discovered that they weren't playing this as a cartoon but rather as real people in comedic situations. When I saw the way they were playing it, I suddenly became very interested."

Kroeger's take on Reggie was "a yuppie with a good heart who can be pretty ruthless.

"I wanted to bring a little bit of humanity to him," says Kroeger. "He's basically the heavy who shows up on the scene after doing something mischievous. But I've given Reggie a sense of responsibility and conscience which, in a sense, is the way the comics played him."

As for how relevant the film and the possible series would be in the



Art: Cesar Cuban/Mike Esposito

"POP GATHERED US TOGETHER FOR A PHOTOGRAPH, JUST LIKE HE'D DONE FIFTEEN YEARS BEFORE," HE TOLD US NOT TO MOVE.
"AND THIS TIME, I DON'T THINK ANYBODY WILL."

"We let Archie and the others grow up," Katz notes.

Fifteen years later, the story is still the romantic triangle between Betty (Holly), Archie (Rich) and Veronica (Kopins).

real life and often real ugly '90s, the actor/comic comments. "It's definitely a balancing act to keep things rich like the comic book and keep it somewhat relevant to the real world. It has been tricky so far. If it gets too campy, then it won't be interesting. And if it gets too real, then it's not Archie."

Moose just comes in, says some stupid things and leaves. It's the ideal situation for me."

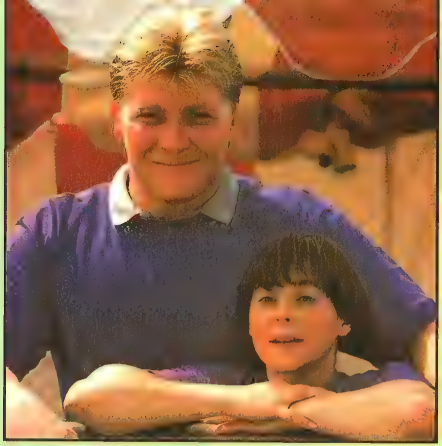
Jeff Hochendoner is far from stupid. The actor, point of fact, is smart enough to peg his dumb jock-turned-chiropractor as one of the most stable people in this *Archie* cluster.

"Midge and I are happily married and we have a relatively normal son. Moose is pretty cut and dried. He's not the brightest guy in the world but he did end up being this successful chiropractor, so that's a twist.

"But don't get me wrong. Playing dumb is not all that easy. Moose used to say things like, 'uh,' 'duh' and 'ah,' and that doesn't play real well on film. What I'm doing is incorporating Moose's attitude with some real funny lines."

Sam Whipple was between agents, very dirty and unshaved the morning the call came for him to try his hand at Jughead.

"I was hesitant," recalls Whipple, who plays Ed Sullivan's producer in the upcoming Doors film. "My first reaction was that I would end up having the words 'You're Jughead' tattooed on my head for the rest of my life. So, I used the excuse that I hadn't showered and shaved for a while. But the casting people told me I didn't have to shower or shave to be Jughead. I shaved and showered,



went to the audition and things just clicked."

Whipple describes Jughead as "more of a loner with an artist mentality who has basically been beaten down by life.

"He's this divorced therapist with a kid who has had his brains beaten out in the big city and is trying to decide whether he should return to Riverdale," says Whipple. "There are many sides to this character that could be explored if the film goes to series. But I'm not worrying about that. *Archie* has series written all over it, but in this business, you never know."

"In the comics," observes TV movie writer Evan Katz, "Archie was always the butt of many jokes."

SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF MAIN STREET AND SCREAMING "ARCHIE ANDREWS GREW UP! HE'S NOT AN INNOCENT TEENAGER ANYMORE, SO STOP TREATING HIM LIKE ONE!"
POP
BUT I GUESS YOU DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT THAT!
Art: Stan Goldberg/Mike Esposito

"Midge [Debi Derryberry] and I are happily married," reveals Jeff Hochendoner, alluding to his TV alter-ego Moose.

Whipple also wonders about just how a grown-up Archie and his friends can fit into this modern world.

"Well, we don't have any drive-by shootings," chortles the actor, "but I play drums and rap 'Sugar Sugar,' and if *that* isn't relevant, then I don't know what is."

Christopher Rich also had doubts about playing the red-headed Archie. But, unlike the others, it was his track record prior to *To Riverdale and Back* that gave him second thoughts.

"I've done many other things like Archie," says Rich who appeared in the short-lived TV sitcom *The Charmings*. "I decided that unless I was going to make a career out of playing mythical creatures, I *shouldn't* do this."

But, like the others, Rich read the script and warmed sufficiently to the *It's a Wonderful Life/Big Chill* quality to take on the carrot-topped character.

"My initial take on Archie was that he was just this guy with thought balloons coming out of his head. The advantage I had in the film is that it takes place 15 years later and Archie isn't a teen anymore, so I've had certain license to change his character."

But Rich claims that hasn't resulted in too many alterations.

"Archie is still unable to make up his mind about being in love. He's still making an effort to do the right thing, but now, he is considering the possibility that he has always been too nice a guy to get what he wanted. He's the character who stayed in Riverdale while everybody else left, and now, he has decided to go out there and live life to the fullest. Unfortunately, when he does the things that go against his character, he gets into all kinds of trouble."

Trouble, according to Rich, has been his constant companion during filming.

"Being so totally tied to the character of Archie has been the one real nightmare of this shoot," says Rich. "Every time I turn around, somebody is telling me that I'm *perfect* for Archie. So far, it has been a living hell and I guess that's my lot in life.

"If this film goes to series, it will still be hell, but at least, it will be a luxurious hell. This is quality stuff. I wouldn't be doing stupid things on a weekly basis, so I could definitely enjoy doing this.

"And besides," laughs Christopher Rich, "when I took this role, I had pretty much decided who the hell needs a career."

Skaaren

(continued from page 51)

like Donald Trump; an attractive, on-the-move guy, not afraid of anything, looking for a beautiful wife!"

The writer's next project promises more "Laughter from the Hereafter."

"Basically, I'm doing *Beetlejuice II*. It will probably start shooting next fall. Not all of the characters will return, just Beetlejuice, Juno [the afterlife social worker] and some of the afterlife characters. We'll see more of Beetlejuice in the afterlife, where he has big problems. He was a bad boy last time!

"I've sort of written the story and showed it to Tim. He liked it, and we worked on it together in December. While he's doing another movie [*Edward Scissorhands*, now shooting], I'm starting to write the script."

And will Skaaren make the "bio-exorcist" more sympathetic?

"Will Beetlejuice be *sympathetic*?!" Skaaren shouts in shock. "Would you like a pitbull to deliver your mail? He certainly *can't* be sympathetic because Beetlejuice is *not* a nice guy. The difference is that Beetlejuice *thinks* he's a nice guy, even though he's actually a demon from Hell.

"As far as what Beetlejuice does in this movie—it's going to be a totally different issue. There won't be *any* of the same issues that were in the first one. What it will have is the same tone, and Beetlejuice will be even more outrageous and cause even more trouble."

While he pens the sequel, Skaaren is pleased that "another work of mine was just purchased, the first piece I ever wrote.

"It's an original story, a kind of classical, Kipling-esque piece called *Of East and West*. It has the flavor of *The Man Who Would Be King* and has to do with the Gurkhas, a culture in the Northern part of Nepal. When the British were there taking over the continent, they conquered all, except the villages of the Gurkhas. When they couldn't conquer them, they made them a traditional, elite force of the British military."

The writer also mentions that the Dark Knight will, of course, return. "Sam Hamm's gonna write *Batman II*. I never met Sam until the movie's premiere. I shook his hand that night, and when *Batman* opened and did well, we exchanged letters. I consider him a creative partner even though I don't know him."

Warren Skaaren closes with advice for budding writers. "Detach from the culture, feed your curiosity—whatever it is, feed it—and then get up every day and eat oatmeal!"

Morrow

(continued from page 28)

and were putting her in the backgrounds when she wasn't even in the script! Still nothing, no one noticed. We had Martha appear *everywhere*. Our big finale, the one thing we thought would do it was when the Indians charged a fort, a big Sioux uprising. There amongst the Indians was Martha riding a charger, waving a spear and wearing her bonnet! It was printed and they *never* said a word. That charade went on for almost a year."

In recent years, Morrow has had to overcome the perception that he isn't a superhero artist. "Most publishers don't think of me as such. This past year, it was a surprise and pleasure to do Batman. I had been approached about doing Batman years ago, more than once. It was a cocky attitude on my part that responded with, 'Yes, I'll do him, but in my own way.' I said I was going to put eyeballs in his mask and wrinkles in his tights. They said they would see me later.

"A while back, there was a DC book [*Heroes Against Hunger*] where the proceeds went towards world hunger. Since they considered this a throwaway item, they let me do Batman. I drew him with the wrinkles and eyeballs and it got printed that way. Occasionally, I would have to draw him in a cameo on some other strip but someone would always white-out the eyes. Apparently, they perceived this as a lack of reverence for the character on my part. I colored and inked the Batcave story for the 1989 *Christmas with the Superheroes* and inked Michael Bair's pencils for the 1989 *Batman Annual*. They left the eyes in," he notes.

By keeping pace with his *Tarzan* strip, his work on the Powerline characters in their own title and Epic's *Critical Mass*, his efforts on this year's *Star Trek Annual*, and coming full circle with *Cracked* parodies and their *Monsters Attack!* horror book, his days remain full. And after years and years of voluminous output, Gray Morrow finds today's industry more challenging and exciting than ever. "I'm happy the industry has gone the way it has. It has opened up so that almost anything goes. If it's commercial, fine, we'll print it. If it works, fine. If not, we'll try something else. We *never* had that freedom when I broke into the business. Today, maybe 90 percent of it will be dreck and forgotten. But who knows what can come out of it? Simply put, I love comics. Unreservedly."

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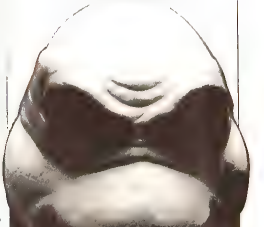

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Pyun

(continued from page 55)

terms of tone. Jean Claude Van Damme came into the picture at the very last minute. *Bloodsport* had been a big hit for Cannon and so the company was anxious to put him in another film real fast. We were about to go into production and were rushing to adapt the script to fit him.

"We didn't have much time and I don't feel the film really worked. But it grossed $10 million, was profitable and provided Cannon with a cash flow which is all they asked for."

Pyun concedes that while nobody was forcing him to make those movies, there was a fear that he was painting himself into a corner.

"I was afraid that people would think the movies I was making were all that I was *capable* of doing. I don't think I was being typed as an action director, but I'm hoping *Captain America* will show people what kind of director I really am and what I'm capable of doing."

A key to whether *Captain America* flies or flops, Pyun offers, is how audiences perceive what he considers a unique point-of-view.

"One of the things about this film that draws the themes into sharper focus is the difference in the way the world was in 1940 and the way it is now. In Captain America, we have someone who was alive in the '40s when times were simpler and people were willing to take responsibility and sacrifice to build a better future and who now has the opportunity to see firsthand what the world has ended up being. We're seeing things through his eyes, which I believe adds important facets to the story."

While Pyun still considers *Captain America* "his job," he is also looking down the line to other projects.

"Marvel recently sent me a script for *Dr. Strange* to look at. I can't say anything at this point because nothing is definite yet, but what I've read looks pretty interesting. I'm also toying with the idea of doing a futuristic surfing movie in Hawaii. The best way to describe it is as an earthbound *Silver Surfer*. There are also a couple of genre things in the talking stage."

Albert Pyun comes full circle to *Captain America* and, while his memories of making the film continue to be more vague than detailed, the director's emotional response to the movie remains fervent.

"What this film is about is that one person *can* make a difference. It doesn't matter whether you're 5 or 85, whether you're weak or strong. What this film is saying is that *everyone* has the potential to change the world and do great things."

America

(continued from page 59)

"Yes, I do," Kirby says quietly. "I see Captain America as you and me. I never saw him any different. I could never see Captain America as a ham actor. I saw Captain America as a real person, as a guy under stress, as a guy in exuberant moods. I saw you and me through all kinds of situations. I happen to love the average guy, and if you read any of my *Captain Americas*, you'll find it all reflected in the strip. I can't speak for Stan. I don't know what he was trying to do. Possibly he could explain it to you. My point-of-view is you and me."

With the *Captain America* movie shot and ready for theatrical (or video) release, media attention is being refocused on Captain America. It isn't the first time the star-spangled avenger has been

Although he had worked on the series again with Stan Lee in the '60s, Kirby never really felt he was doing "his" Cap until he returned to it in the mid-'70s.

brought to the screen. A 1944 Republic serial was done without Simon and Kirby's input—as well as without Steve Rogers, Bucky and Cap's trademark shield. Dick Purcell portrayed him as fighting district attorney Grant Gardner.

"They were done like all serials were done," Kirby observes. "They were done trite and very quickly. Of course, that was how they came off to me on the screen. Their time is limited, so they get in their point quick, fast, and that's how they emerge to the viewer."

"I never saw the serial," Simon says dismissively. "I saw the two TV movies. They were *more* than embarrassing."

The 1970s TV movies also distorted the original concept. Captain America (played by Reb Brown) became a Spandex-clad biker who wore a blue crash helmet and whose transparent shield doubled as the windshield of his motorcycle!

"I took them as they made them," Kirby chuckles, declining to comment further on the CBS productions.

As for the new movie, neither Simon nor Kirby are involved behind the scenes on this one, either.

"I have no idea what they're going to do with him," Kirby says. "They'll probably use a lot of my gimmicks in it. They're certainly not consulting *me* on it. I'll go see it and see the kind of job they did on it. They'll handle him in their own way. My curiosity would be on what their particular way is."

"They put our names in the ads," Simon adds. "That's about all they did for us. I just hope it's not embarrassing."

As they look back over the last 50 years, Joe Simon and Jack Kirby see Captain America and the character's importance in their careers in different lights.

"Captain America was something that we did when we both were very young," Kirby says. "In fact, Joe was just out of college and I was out of the Lower East Side. We both enjoyed doing Captain America. We just made it a lifelong progression.

"He was our big creation," Jack Kirby adds. "He symbolized an entire period. In fact, he symbolized things that lasted for many, many years. He went through all the heartaches and all the joy that particular era symbolized. Captain America was very, very real. Bucky was real. I can tell you that Joe and I were real. The only trick that confronted us was the dialogue, and we did well on that."

Simon is more sanguine.

"Captain America was just another bump in the road," he says. "DC wouldn't have given us as much money for *Boy Commandos* if we hadn't been doing such a big seller. The best art we ever did was *Boy's Ranch*. I think the best character we ever had—and probably many people would disagree—was Bullseye. Both of them happened to be Westerns. *Boy Commandos* and *Young Romance* surpassed *Captain America* in sales and were more profitable for a longer time."

Still, Joe Simon appreciates what Captain America has become.

"Captain America had staying power, and more important, star power. He is a symbol—a flag-draped icon—and he makes me proud because I took part in his creation."

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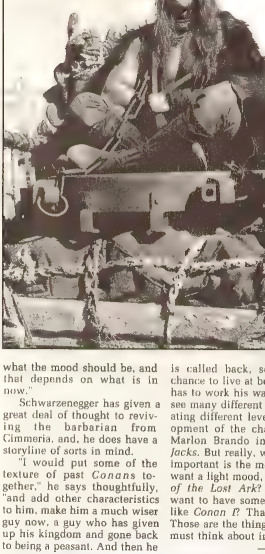
COMICS REPORTER

Conan the Conceived

Is there a Conan sequel in Arnold Schwarzenegger's future?



Conan Photo: Copyright 1981 Dino De Laurentiis Corporation

Would superstar Arnold Schwarzenegger return to the barbarian role that made him famous in a *Conan III*?

"I cannot say yes and I cannot say no," the actor says, "because it depends on the timing and all those kinds of things. So, I don't rule it out. I think what is more important is to have the best script possible. To find another John Milius, or Milius himself, that will write another *Conan*. Or Oliver Stone. If Oliver Stone comes to me today and says, 'I will write, direct *Conan III*,' I would do it because I know this would not be an ordinary movie. Stone wrote the first Conan movie, and it was *staggering*. Milius rewrote it because Dino De Laurentiis wanted to tone it down. It was great. So, with those kinds of guys, I could do any of those films—*Conan III*, *Commando II*. You have a blockbuster."

Schwarzenegger's reluctance to star in a third Conan is not out of disenchantment with the character. If anything, it's the reverse that's holding him back. "I really *loved* the Conan movies," Schwarzenegger admits. "I just loved the big character and his primitiveness. It was a fantasy I had as a kid. There are so many Conan movies—the sorcery thing, underwater darkness, big battles with fire. Conan the thief, warrior, the adventurous guy. You can do this with different moods. You just have to decide what the mood should be, and that depends on what is in now."

Schwarzenegger has given a great deal of thought to reviving the barbarian from Cimmeria, and, he does have a storyline of sorts in mind.

"I would put some of the texture of past *Conans* together," he says thoughtfully, "and add other characteristics to him, make him a much wiser guy now, a guy who has given up his kingdom and gone back to being a peasant. And then he is called back, so he has a chance to live at both ends. He has to work his way back up. I see many different ways of creating different levels of development of the character, like Marlon Brando in *One-Eyed Jacks*. But really, what is more important is the mood. Do you want a light mood, like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*? Or do you want to have something heavy like *Conan I*? That depends. Those are the things you really must think about in the story."

—*Will Murray*

COMICS screen

These characters are being developed for other media. *All* projects are live-action unless specified. Those marked by an asterisk have changed status since last listing. Not everything listed will ultimately be made. **Attn. all pros:** Clarifications & other info to be added to this list are cheerfully invited. Send to COMICS SCENE, 475 Park Ave. South, 8th Flr., NY, NY 10016.

The Addams Family. Film. Orion. Cher *may* play Morticia.

The Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters. Animated series. Rankin-Bass, producers.

The Adventures of Pico and Columbus. Animated feature from Bavaria Film. Phil Nibbelink, directing animator; Scott Santoro, special FX.

The Airtight Garage. Animated film of Moebius saga. Moscow's Soyuzmultfilm Studios, North American Trading Co. & Starwatcher Graphics, co-producers. Script: Randy Loffician. In production.

The American. Film. Joel Silver, producer. Script: Mark Verheiden.

American Flagg! Film.

An American Tail. Film sequel due fall 1991. TV series may follow. HB.

* **Annie.** Film. Lewis Gilbert, director. Musical *Annie II: Miss Hannigan's Revenge* being revised. New Annie: Lauren Gaffney.

Ant-Man. Film.

* **Archie.** Film. *Archie & Veronica*. Targeted for summer 1991. Warner Bros. Script: Jeff Boam. Archie: Corey Haim. NBC TV movie/series pilot. To *Riverdale & Back*. DIC. Archie: Chris Rich. Script: Evan Katz. Exec producers: Tom Patchett, Andy Heyward. Aired May. (see article)

Arzach. Film of Moebius hero. Kirk Thatcher, producer.

The Avengers. Film. John Steed. Script: Sam Hamm.

Babar. Airs on HBO. Nelvana.

Batman II. Script: Sam Hamm.

Beetle Bailey. Film.

* **Beetlejuice.** Animated Saturday a.m. series on ABC & video. Film sequel being scripted.

* **Blackhawk.** Film. Amblin Entertainment. Dan Aykroyd *may* script.

Blade. Film. Script: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

* **Blondie.** Film. Disney. Possible Goldie Hawn vehicle.

James Bond. Animated series, *Adventures of James Bond Jr.*

Betty Boop. Animated half-hour special, *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*, for CBS. Film. Richard Fleischer, director.

* **Brenda Starr, Reporter.** Theatrical release delayed by legalities now being untangled. *May* debut late summer.

* **Bugs Bunny.** New syndicated animated series with young Warner characters, *Tiny Toon Adventures*. Debuts fall '90. New short "Box Office Bunny" out this summer.

Bullwinkle. *Boris & Natasha*, with Sally Kellerman & Dave Thomas. Script: Charles Fradin. Charles Martin-Smith, director.

Captain America. Film. Script: Stephen Tolkin. Albert Pyun, director. Captain America: Matt Salinger. (see article)

* **Captain Planet.** Animated series featuring environmental superheroes. Debuts fall.

Cathy. Animated TV specials on CBS.

Charlie Chan. Film. Chan: B.D. Wong. Fred Levinson, director. Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde, producers.

Chicken Man. Animated series based on Dick Orkin's '70s radio spoofs. Calico.

Chip & Dale. *Rescue Rangers* airing. Animated film due '91.

City of Darkness. Film. Script: Patrick Cirillo & Joe Gayton. Comics superhero & supervillain enter real world for epic battle. Michael Douglas, Rick Bieber, producers. Columbia.

* **Conan.** Film. (see item)

Cracked. Superhero parody.

Deathlok. Film.

Delta Tenn. TV movie. Shannon Tweed. Touchstone. NBC.

* **Dick Tracy.** Film. Disney. Warren Beatty, director & star. Out. (see article)

* **Dinosaurs for Hire.** Film. Script: Richard Finney & James Bonny. 20th Fox. Jim Henson's Creature Shop will devise creatures.

DNAgents. Film. UA.

Doc Savage. Film.

Dr. Strange. Film. Script: Bob

Gale. Seeks studio. Separate TV movie.

Droopy. Will co-star with son Dribble in *Tom & Jerry Kids*, HB animated series for TBS.

Evangeline. Film. Funnybook Films.

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. Bernard Eichinger, producer.

The Far Side. Film. Alan Rudolph, director. Seeks studio.

Felix the Cat. Animated film. Produced, still no release.

Fish Police. Animated series.

* **The Flash**. CBS TV movie pilot. Warner Bros. Flash: John Wesley Shipp. Tina McGee: Amanda Pays.

* **The Flintstones**. Film. Fred: John Goodman. Universal & Amblin. *Flintstone Kids* cancelled. Leaves air fall.

Fu Manchu. Film. Secret *of Fu Manchu*. David Carradine stars.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends* renewed for next season, on CBS.

Ghost Rider. Film. New Line.

The Green Hornet. Film. Universal. Being written.

Green Lantern. Film. Joel Silver, producer. Being written.

Grimjack. Film.

Gumby. Film.

He-Man. *New Adventures of He-Man*, a 65-episode series, due fall 1990. LBS Communications.

Honkytonk Sue. Film.

* **Human Target**. TV movie/series pilot. ABC. Stars Rick Springfield, Clarence Clemons.

The Incredible Hulk. TV movie, *Rebirth of the Hulk*???

Inspector Gadget. Live-action half-hour TV series version. DIC. For Family Channel.

* **Iron Man**. Film. Stuart Gordon, director (?).

* **The Jetsons**. Animated film. HB/Universal. Out July.

Jo Jo. Film. Lee Caplin, producer. Story: Mike Chapman.

Jonny Quest. Film. Universal.

* **Judge Dredd**. Film. Script: Howard Claykin & John Moore. Charles Lippincott, producer.

* **Justice League**. TV movie pilot. NBC. Lorimar. For consideration next season.

Kaanga. Film. Script: director Geoffrey Edwards, Sam Bernard, Lee Caplin, Blake Edwards, Tony Adams, producers.

Kaptain Keen & Ko. Planned animated series. Rankin-Bass.

Lt. Blueberry. Film. Walter Hill, director.

Li'l Abner. TV. Max & Michaeline Keller, producers.

Little Nemo in Slumberland. Animated film. TMS Ent.

The Lone Ranger. Syndicated half-hour TV series for fall 1990. Also separate live-action film. John Landis, director. Universal.

Lone Wolf & Cub. Film. Edward Pressman, producer. Script: Bill Wisher.

Lucky Luke. TV series (for international broadcast). Terence Hill, star. Silvio Berlusconi Communications. 10 episodes. To film in U.S. in June.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. Writer/producer Larry Wilson. Co-producer: Walter Hill. Carolco.

Mandrake. Film. Italy's Pentafilm.

* **The Mask**. Film. New Line.

Mickey Mouse. Animated featurette "The Prince & the Pauper" due out fall '90.

Mr. Jigsaw. Ron Fortier-Gary Kato character optioned for animation by Rankin-Bass.

Mr. Magoo. Film. Steven

Return of the Rabbit
That Maroon Cartoon dream team, Roger Rabbit & Baby Herman, are back in an all-new cartoon, "Rollercoaster Rabbit." Directed by Rob Minkoff, the new short zooms into theaters alongside *Dick Tracy*.
Rabbit Art: Copyright 1990 The Walt Disney Company & Amblin Entertainment

Tisch, producer. Also animated film with niece, Megan Magoo.

Mr. X. Film. Jim Cash & Jack Epps, producers.

My Secret Identity. Syndicated sitcom with Ultraman airing.

Nancy. *Nancy The Movie*. Peter Muller, producer.

Negative Man. New Bob Kane hero. Live-action series. Nelvana.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. Script: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price, producers. Script: Ken Shadie. *Phantom* creator Lee Falk, consultant.

* **Plastic Man**. Film. Script: Charles Gale. Warner Bros. & Amblin Entertainment.

The Prowler. Film. Funnybook Films.

* **The Punisher**. Film. Dolph Lundgren stars. Mark Goldblatt, director. Due out shortly.

Radio Boy. Animated.

Roger Rabbit. "Rollercoaster Rabbit" plays with *Dick Tracy*.

Secret Agent X-9. Animated film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

* **Sgt. Rock**. Film. Rock: Bruce Willis. John McTiernan, director. Joel Silver, producer. Script: Steven de Souza & David Peoples. To film in March '91.

The Shadow. Film. Script: Howard Franklin. Martin Bregman, producer.

* **The She-Hulk**. One-hour TV scripts ordered for possible 1991 revolving segment ABC series.

The Simpsons. Animated series airs on FBC.

* **Spider-Man**. Film. Script: Neil Ruttenberg & Joseph Goldman. Due X-mas '90. Animated *Marvel Universe* segment continues. Scripts ordered for possible 1991 revolving segment ABC series.

Sub-Mariner. Film.

Suicide Squad. CBS TV pilot. Lorimar.

Superboy. Syndicated TV series now airing.

* **Superman**. *Superman V* is being developed. Chris Reeve may be involved as writer/director/star. There's no go-ahead for shooting, but it may lense eventually in Florida.

* **Swamp Thing**. Half-hour TV series for USA Network. 13 episodes. To film at Universal Florida Studios. ST: Dick Durock.

* **Tales from the Crypt**. HBO series. 18 new episodes. Directors include Arnold Schwarzenegger, Richard Donner, Walter Hill, Chris Walas, Jack Sholder, Fred Dekker, Steven Spielberg.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. Animated series in syndication. CBS animated series due fall '90. Live-action film sequel to shoot in January for '91 release.

Terry & the Pirates. Film. Script: Jules Feiffer. Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde, producers. Stan Weston, exec producer.

Thor. Animated series.

Time Beavers. Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke.

* **Tin-Tin**. Film. "Abandoned" at Amblin. Animated series pilot in works. Nelvana.

Tom & Jerry. New animated 13-episode *Tom & Jerry Kids* for TBS. Due fall '90.

Trouble with Girls. Film. 20th Century Fox & Funnybook Films. Script: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones. Matt Pepler, Neal Tabachnick, producers.

* **Two-Fisted Tales**. Half-hour anthology. FBC. Pilot. "Showdown." Script: Frank Darabont. Dick Donner, director. Three more episodes ordered.

Valentina. 13-episode half-hour TV series. Stars Demetra Hampton. Reteitalia Production.

Vampirella. Film. Writer/director Jim Wynorski plans two films to shoot back-to-back.

V for Vendetta. Film. Warner.

WARP. Film. Script: Mark Victor & Michael Grais, producers.

Watchmen. Film. Script: Sam Hamm. Joel Silver, producer. Terry Gilliam, director. Seeks studio.

Wizard of Id. Film. Script: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen. David & Jerry Zucker to direct.

Wolverine. Film.

Wonder Woman. TV series. Either for syndication or CBS.

* **The X-Men**. Animated five-episode mini-series for FBC. Marvel Productions. Will chronicle team's origin.

Zen, Intergalactic Ninja. Film. Animated series. Scripts: Steven Stern.

Zippyvision. Film. Script: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin. Features Zippy the Pinhead.

Zorro. Half-hour TV series airs on Family Channel. Zorro: Duncan Regehr.

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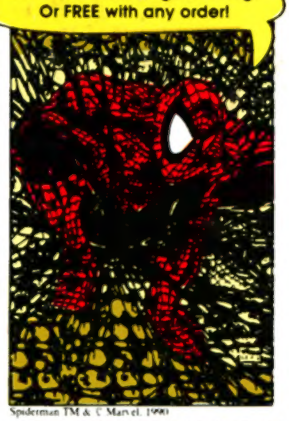

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